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T. S. ELIOT
AND
THE LAY READER

by
E. M. STEPHENSON

THE FORTUNE PRESS
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*For Mona Stephenson
remembered as "Tim"*
(May 13, 1926—June 2, 1939)

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand
into the hand of God. That shall be to you better
than light and safer than any known way."

M. LOUISE HASKINS.

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NOTE:

The First Edition of "T. S. Eliot and the Lay Reader" was sold within a few weeks of publication. In accordance with the generally-expressed wish that it should be longer and more detailed it has been recast in chronological order; with three additional chapters on "The Nature of Eliot's Poetry," "Poetic Form" and "Technique." "The Rock Choruses" have been extended and the two plays included, with historic references bearing on the psychology of "Murder in the Cathedral."

ETHEL M. STEPHENSON.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. ELIOT IN A NEW ASPECT	9
2. THE PRUFROCK MANUSCRIPT	13
3. THE 1920 POEMS	17
4. THE WASTE LAND	18
5. THE NATURE OF ELIOT'S POETRY	36
6. POETIC FORM	38
7. TECHNIQUE	41
8. TRANSITIONAL POEMS	46
9. ARIEL POEMS	48
10. THE ROCK CHORUSES	54
11. MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL (PLAY)	61
12. BURNT NORTON	75
13. THE FAMILY REUNION (PLAY)	81
14. EAST COKER and THE DRY SALVAGES	86
15. LITTLE GIDDING	88
16. THE UNFOLDING LIGHT	93

THE FOUR QUARTETS constitute:—

Burnt Norton

East Coker

The Dry Salvages

Little Gidding

ELIOT IN A NEW ASPECT

MODERN poetry found its key lying in Eliot's open hand, who had unlocked the door leading into the garden of weeds and flowers inherited by this generation.

But to say that modern poetry began with Eliot is to invite the full force of the poet's own deprecation. His conception in relation to life is not unlike the analogy of the coral polyp and the vast oceans in which it floats. The coral animal secretes lime and other deposits from the sea-water and adds this contribution, as its life-work, to the loveliness of the great barrier reefs, whose branches, like trees, thread the oceans. Some build on the leeward in the sunlight of soft blue lagoons; others build on the outer, striving fringe, facing storms and battering tides. In the same way poets have built their poetry-reef. They have floated in the vast life-tides, they have secreted that veiled knowledge which lies within the rise and fall of human apprehension. In their particular generation they, like the coral, add their life's work to the slowly-rising reef grafted to the past and already forming the future. Each poet's contribution imperceptibly heightens the great reef which will give to future poets an increased altitude of vision, such as that which the corals bequeath, built on the creative work of their forebears.

Between the submerged coral and the Atoll (sometimes reaching 4,000 ft.) is a scale of measurement, but the measurement does not lie so much with time as with constant purpose.

The slight originality allotted to a brief span of life has been used by Mr. Eliot in the fullest sense of variation.

(He is a poet, forced by the exigencies of two terrible wars, to build on the outward, stormy side of the reef, whereas Tennyson and Browning (whatever their personal struggles) wrote on the leeward lagoon of England's Victorian prosperity. So it seems only natural that Eliot should be a Dramatic poet, through an intense sense of the pain and pity of life

* The opening sentence is delayed so that the reader's sense of timing is not disturbed while Eliot unlocks the door for him.

to-day. But, like all great artists, he has found an escape. It is the waywardness of Eliot's humour which immediately dispels that most unfortunate and dismal label—"the poet of disillusion." In "*Prufrock*"; "*The Waste Land*"; "*The Book of Old Possum*," humour bubbles just below the surface. Usually, if an author is disillusioned, he is automatically bitter or cynical; yet there is no trace of such detriment in any of Eliot's work, which is full of understanding, tolerance and bravery. It is as though he saw people in the brief period of their earth-lives in Purgatory, and for this he has the sympathy of a Dante or a Shakespeare.

To see people as they are, and not as they pretend to be, is not disillusion but common sense. Pretence is wasted time, for in the end truth shines through, however clever the falsehood.

Eliot's work, then, is far more that of VERITY, which is traceable throughout the three phases of his poetry. The first two phases are concerned intimately with the medium of people, while the last comprehends all things as a unity in timelessness.

The first phase in "*Prufrock*" and the "*1920 Poems*" is an agile and brilliant summary of acutely-observed human behaviour, followed in "*The Waste Land*" by a more highly developed observation, coupled with the essence of ancient lore in racial magic and taboo. "*The Waste Land*" is fundamental and perennial because of the old beliefs that after every war the land lies barren and sick, for which a talisman must be found which can make it fertile and happy again. Eliot modernised this theme after the 1914 War, and it is one of the greatest of our War poems.

Then comes the second phase in his writing, which we might call the Transitional poems. In these, observation shows a deeper purpose; an inherent desire to regard all people as God's children stumbling and groping towards the meaning of Life. Of all Eliot's poetry, these are perhaps the most human, and it is in these poems that he finds a fortitude and faith which has no part in disillusion. Verity still permeates his thought to the end.

"And among his hearers were a few good men,
Many who were evil,
And most who were neither
Like all men in all places."

In the third period, a series of country poems, which begin with "*Burnt Norton*," Eliot's purified form is one in which Timelessness is sustained to the point of profound repose.

He reaches a calm that could only be attained by suffering and understanding. His men and women have imperceptibly moved into the shadow of humanity as a whole. They too, like time in timelessness, are people in a journeying caravan.

It is in these poems that the poet's skill, in the grouping of sound, seems to have reached a rhythm as near the rhythm of the sea as any writer has yet reached. The frequent doubling of a word carries a submerged swell, very like the wave that forms far out at sea and does not quite reach its breaking peak. His musical phrases, though we term them FREE, nevertheless fall as the complement of each other. Mr. Eliot's use of symbols is also not exacting—The rose, used frequently for love; the dog (except in Marina) for sincerity; brown hair for affectionate memory, and fire as the expression of earth-desire, are all in constant use.

With Eliot's sense of Timelessness it is possible for him to talk with the Magi, or to meet Stetson in London to-day, or long ago in the ships at Mylae, and to bring Spenser to the Thames Embankment in the twentieth century.

We too, like the Elizabethans, have every right to glory in our poets and playwrights, and to enjoy, as they did, our contemporary geniⁱ.^{*} They did not live in a literary vacuum any more than we, for we are still on this brave little island, surrounded by the music and inspiration of the sea.

If the question is put, "For what audience does Mr. Eliot write?" The answer would be emphatically—"None."

Any writer who has a background of great, perceptive strength is not dependent either on a public's likes or dislikes, and he is, therefore, writing for an epoch and not a fashionable people.

The full strength of the literary world has been launched for and against Mr. Eliot. Dive-bombers, tanks, dreadnoughts of the intelligentsia have manœuvred and battled, yet it might not be wrong to say that the versatile young parachutists have carried much of the day in their support of this twentieth-century poet.

There is a further field beyond the contentiousness of supporters or opposers, and it belongs to the growing community of the reading public.

When contemplating the work of any poet, the first question to put is a simple one—"What has this writer achieved?"

^{*}*I use the archaic plural to obviate the ugliness of genuses. Date 1847.*

And if we do not fly off at a tangent, the answer should be as full of simplicity as the question.

If we exclude the sun's light, which is absorbed by chlorophyll for food value, there would appear to be nothing wrong with the old saying, "There is nothing new." That only means that there is nothing new coming in from outside, but it does not mean that there is not a vast amount of material at our feet which we neither understand, nor know how to manipulate. We are constantly discovering new things, new meanings, new uses for things that have been here since the world began; always some new interpretation of 'oldnesses.'

We may vary little from our ancestors, but whereas they raced a chaise from London to Brighton, we now race a Typhoon aeroplane. The practice of racing is still the same, but its form has evolved with the circumstances and development of Man; carving new channels for expressing known axioms, and new poets who will find a new way of setting the precious jewels of the past.

The chronological order of Eliot's poems is as follows:—

Early Poems

Prufrock, 1911

1920 Poems

Transitional Poems

The Waste Land

The Hollow Men

Ash Wednesday

Ariel Poems

Coriolan

Minor Poems

(link through)

Pageant Poetry

1st Play

(to)

Pure Poetry

(2nd Play intervenes)

The Rock Choruses

Murder in the Cathedral

Burnt Norton

The Family Reunion

East Coker

The Dry Salvages

Little Gidding, 1942

THE PRUFROCK MANUSCRIPT

LET us sing a gay song, for as Walter Pater says: "A kind of humour is, in truth, one of the conditions of the just mental attitude, in the criticism of by-past stages of thought."

Some of the dilemmas of Prufrock are extremely humorous. There are similar undercurrents in "*The Waste Land*" and in "*Old Possum*." In that deep mysterious knowledge of the statesmanship of cats, there is surely to be found the Third Eye of the Master of all Emotion.

But no! Everybody insists on heaping Eliot with clerical cloaks, so that he is nearly out of sight in relation to his integral personality.

However, if Mr. Prufrock is to maintain his middle-aged propriety, some of the cloaks must be spared to fashion him a discreet morning coat, and also some spared for ourselves, who shall accompany him as he passes through "certain half-deserted streets."

The staging of "*Prufrock*" is not unlike a marionette show, with young Eliot of 1911 hanging over the concealed upper bar, manipulating the strings of his human dolls; the latter being all dressed up and ready for the word, Go! They are to do all manner of things, that could or might be done, either as a joke, an experience, or simply through waywardness.

Some people have suggested that Prufrock is really Mr. Eliot. In the sense that Eliot collected him and riveted him together, he is bound to be the final manufacture of Eliot, but it is unnecessary to assume that Prufrock is more than a combination of varied observations coupled with imagination.

Certain whimsical aspects of imagination are always with us. They are not unlike the felt presence of bats in the shadowy night. They are and they are not; they were and they might be again; nobody quite knows except the yoked, whose logical brain thinks and says no other than—*Why them's bats!*

Prufrock is the most important marionette in the first two Acts and leads the troupe on to the stage. He is dressed in the forties, though he acts and talks like a young man,

• thinking half-seriously, half-humorously of life—that stage in life which every young man and girl reaches, in which they feel they have eaten its kernel, little dreaming of the folded meanings hidden in its further structure.

Perhaps Eliot was thinking in lines of Axioms—such as:—
A radius of a circle is a straight line drawn from the centre to the circumference. It follows that all radii of a circle are equal. ! So in "*Prufrock*" we find a poet working within a given circumference, from a certain point. This circumference represents the middle class in the year 1911, and Prufrock is the point at its centre. His whole charm lies in his capacity for dropping large bricks amongst a group of people who are careful custodians of "What is done."

Prufrock, his companion and ourselves are about to enter an ordinary house. The curling fog does a magnificent piece of stage-acting and is really a first-class fellow, getting his stuff well across the footlights. For surely it must be remembered that every word we use is an actor in itself, demanding Time, Space and Movement as its due.

Going up the steps, Prufrock lets fall his first brick. It is the foundation stone of much of Eliot's later work on Timelessness:—

"There will be time to murder and create
 And time for all the works and days of hands
 That lift and drop a question on your plate."

Here, then, is the dilemma! A thinker in the midst of the middle-class formulated phrase. The radii of whose circle are equal.

All might yet have gone well with the success of the afternoon (helped by the noble efforts of Michelangelo, whose main asset seems that his name rhymes with come and go) had not Prufrock begun measuring out his life in coffee spoons—"Well, really, Mr. Prufrock. What an odd man you are! One knows what poets are expected to say; something like, 'Life is one weary round of wearying weariness; or, One day is like another day's day.' But coffee spoons!" What formulated phrase was ever invented and approved that was strong enough to cope with such an unexpected contretemps and row us to safety across this sea of silence!

Prufrock himself thought hastily of narrow streets, chimney-pots and lonely men in shirt sleeves; but alas, none of them seemed just the right thing to say. Yet, once more Michelangelo saves the situation by his firmness over the word "Go." All except Prufrock and the long-fingered lady with the fish-hook have departed. Prufrock might now have had a good

time, if it had not been for his propensity to confuse the sublime with the ridiculous; or if his companion had not been quite so determined about what she intended him to mean. So the cross-purpose continues until we see Prufrock unhappily struggling into his greatcoat with the help of a third-rate butler, so ill-trained as to snigger meaningly.

(Bertie Wooster, always of the essence, would have gladly lent Jeeves to the unfortunate lady. Jeeves, who alone on a butler's earth could have settled the dilemma.)

Yet we must remember this particular scene as the latent power of future scenes in the work of this poet.

"Portrait of a Lady."

Dear Lady! You deserved a better ending. Your staging lacked nothing; your atmosphere was thick with purpose; all that was missing was the pure flame of passionate certainty; that knowledge which discards everything except simplicity. So much, then, for your foredoomed failure. Prufrock, just a young man's idea, is clever but unreal. A stuffed doll and a 'mealy-boy' in the most phlegmatic terms. Only a real woman could have applied the short shrift he needed. Yet we have not done, the act drags out its inevitable ending, with Prufrock, that cadaverous humorist, climbing the stairs, as if on his hands and knees! It is such a human touch of submerged dread, that Prufrock becomes almost a man.

The lady having long since lost all sense of proportion and dignity, precipitates the farce to the final fraying of the last bearable thread. But her value, like the other lady's, lies with the future. She is the cartoon of the future woman which Eliot paints in such rich colours in *The Game of Chess*.

It is with the close of this portrait that the career of Prufrock ends. He is relieved of his stage duties by a younger though more experienced actor.

This is significant, since it suggests that Eliot's thought was not really satisfied with the radius of the Imagist movement. Even though Prufrock was given the assistance of every limitation, such as age, thin hair, arms and legs, and states unmistakably—"I grow old . . . I grow old . . . I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled," there is throughout the poem a desire to break away from the orthodox Imagist movement. We are forced back to reconsider Eliot's motive in using the hide-bound middle-class mind as his circle of action. Consciously or unconsciously he has shown the static quality of the Imagist orthodoxy and its too crystallized form.

From this point a new element invades Eliot's poetry; that of humanism. Yet we cannot claim to be unwarned:—

"She has a bowl of lilacs in her room
And twists one in her fingers while she talks.
'Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know
What life is, you who hold it in your hands';
(Slowly twisting the lilac stalk)."

Here endeth the chronicles of Mr. Prufrock. But the marionettes clamour to go on with their life at the end of strings. There are good smells of steak, beer and early coffee stalls, with all kinds of amazing situations. So they raise the dingy shades in a thousand furnished rooms, and call in a younger actor for the part that Prufrock once played.

This stranger has greater gifts. Imagery now has a furthered use as it merges with humanism. This new leader of the troupe has "watched square fingers stuffing pipes" and caught "the notion of some infinitely suffering thing." He has seen much of life, this stranger;—Seen it in the dim light of street lamps; but though the bitterness has not escaped him, neither has its pathos. He watched and understood the damp souls of housemaids in dark areas; and saw the aimless smile of the passer-by lose itself along the level of the roofs.

Many scenes are tried out by the marionettes, with success and laughter, for this stranger has many wonderful tales to tell. His versatility sweeps every corner of life and not a cobweb escapes an appreciation of its genius. Suddenly he grows tired. It is late and dreams are near. Softly the marionettes steal away, but in the falling night our stranger is not alone, for the picture of The Weeping Girl (*La Figlia Che Piange*) is there instead.

The show is ended. We leave the teller of tales with his dreams, still murmuring as he smokes his pipe—"... weave weave the sunlight in your hair." 'O quam te memore virgo'—How my memory turns towards you.

References:—

Italian translation on title page:—

"If I were to believe that my answer was to be to a person who was to come back to this world, this flame would be without a flicker. But because no one does come out again from this depth, if I hear truth, without fear of harm, I answer you."

Jules Laforgue was a poet of the symbolist school (Mid-19th Century) who died in 1887. The theme running through his

work is an attempt to express the relative unimportance of everyday life, and the inability of the individual to see it in its true perspective. ("Pierrots.")

The power of the Third eye of the Master of all Emotion. From the translation by F. W. Bain of "*A Heifer of the Dawn*," from the original Sanskrit, commencing with an Invocation. (Parker, Oxford.)

Cauchemar—A nightmare.

Walter Pater. "*Appreciations*." (Macmillan.)

David Daiches. "*Poetry and the Modern World*," Chapter V. (Chicago University Press.)

"The room with the woman, as it appears when we consider the poem as a whole, is a symbolic situation, symbolic of that empty, middle-class, drawing-room society whose atmosphere is one of the most essential parts of the poem." (P. 112.)

"Eliot's poetry has all the suggestiveness of the French Symbolists, but it has a much more complex kind of organization than their poetry has, and further, the suggestiveness manifests itself only to the alert intellect." (P. 112.)

THE 1920 POEMS

If in the Prufrock manuscript we found a poet discarding the standardized medium of milk and honey, in 1920 we can hardly be surprised if we hear the persistent thud of a blood-language beating out its organic rhythms to our own chaotic tempo.

Recorded in these poems we see the effect of a Western world dominated by mechanical device, deliberately satiating itself with every easy luxury, which can build it castles in Spain. A world oblivious to any sense of responsibility for the cultivation of mind or social friendliness. An Age surely when the tolerance of *Live and let live* has given place to the hard principle of *The devil take the hindmost*.

The opening gambit of the Humanistic pawn which appeared towards the end of Prufrock has been swept from the board by Realism; and thus the poetic Queen's Square is menaced by disillusion and commercialism. The idea of a kindly people is absent; the vaunted progress of humanity denied; the love of man for fellow-men lost in hatred and greed of gain; a whole world lying at the mercy of chicanery, facing anti-climax.

The fine dry-point of these black and white etchings our vaunted civilization, naked on the white page of achievement. (Future generations may appraise this in their own terms, but for us he has shown reality.)

The 1920 poems are in truth a series of anatomical character sketches for the final engraving of "*The Waste Land*."

Two of these figures have already been outlined in "*The Portrait of a Lady*" and "*La Figlia Che Piange*." To these we now add the special study of "*Gerontion*" because the *chiaroscuro* of this poem plays an important part in the background of the final picture. In this cartoon we find the texture of:—"Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season," to be that of the "*Burial of the Dead*"; and the Communion, of which Mr. Silvero to Fraulein von Kulp, will partake, is reminiscent of the "torchlight red on sweaty faces" found in the opening stanza of "*What the Thunder Said*."

"*Bleistein*"; "*Sweeney Erect*"; "*Le Directeur*"; "*The Hippopotamus*"; "*Dans le Restaurant*"; "*Whispers of Immortality*" are vignettes for a cartoon already outlined in Eliot's mind for his great poem in 1922.

What caused this sudden reversion to realism we can only surmise, but the reaction of a sensitive mind to any character so foul as that of *Le garçon* or *Sweeney* has had the gravest repercussion. (From Sanskrit stories I have gathered the impression that the Brahmin holds the belief that even the slightest movement of the body contains in it the seeds of good or evil, which has its corresponding effect on others. The responsibility lies, then, with the mind that directs movement.

THE WASTE LAND

A POET'S most famous work is not always his best poetry, but has frequently won its status in the public mind by the scope of its appeal. In this case Eliot chose as his theme the phallic law of Fertility—Death—Resurrection.

The parallels of modern life with tradition, presented him with a structural analogy, based on the whole fibre of civilization.

"*Waste Land*" is perpetuate in subject, but in derivation it is limited by the barren period in which Eliot lived and recorded it. His poet's camera has faithfully photographed a decade of civilization absorbed in destruction. Such an age has bare earth, stones, pestilence and famine to offer its worshippers. It is a reminder of the parable of the steward who buried his one talent rather than that his master should gain. So we read this poem as a sincere and grave indictment of world achievement in this our Twentieth Century.

Matthiessen in his chapter on "*The Integrity of a Work of Art*," writes:—"The value of the tragic writer has always lain in the uncompromising honesty with which he has cut through appearances to face the real condition of man's lot, in his refusal to be deceived by an easy answer, in the unflinching, if agonized, expression of what he knows to be true."

"*The Waste Land*" is so nearly a play in characterization, setting and plot, that we are conscious when reading it of the loss of a great play or ballet. Scenes which are not happy in the liquid context of a poem would, in a play or choreographed, be noted by the eye and not the ear.

Turning to the title page of "*The Waste Land*," we read:—"For I saw with my own eyes a celebrated Sibyl at Cumae, hanging in a bottle, and when her Acolytes (boys) said, 'What do you wish, O Sibyl?' she replied—'I wish to die.'"

The famous Cumaean Sibyl was supposed to be the authoress of the Sibylline Oracles. Apollo loved her and granted her the gift of prophecy and also a life of as many years as she had grains of dust in her hand; but she forgot to ask for youth, and so gradually withered away almost to nothing. The quotation says, 'hanging in a bottle,' and is a quotation from Petronius—*Satyricon*, 48. 8. The speaker Trimalchio is drunk and says he cannot explain the vision, but that it does not affect his poem.

This quotation is followed up immediately in the first four lines of the opening poem. Memory is revived; desire may not sleep; the Sibyl may not die! The sun breaks through and the soft fertilization of spring-rain drops to release the dormant life-urge. Released to what end?—Fear!

"And I was frightened," he said, "Marie, Marie, hold on tight."

Eliot invites us to look beneath the surface values. To:—"... come in under the shadow of this red rock," because its shadow is one of eternity. "I will show you something"

different from either your shadow at morning, striding behind you, or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; I will show you Fear in a handful of dust." This last line should be particularly noted as it is one of Eliot's most dramatic lines. He is not speaking of the fear of death, but the fear of what the embryonic life, contained in a handful of dust, is likely to produce. What will it create? We do not know, but its movement is suggested by Hyacinths, Spring's expression of renewed life.

Frisch weht der wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilst du?

Fresh blows the wind
Towards the homeland
My Irish child,
Where are you now?

The hyacinth girl recalls "*La Figlia Che Piange*" from the collected poems in "*J. Alfred Prufrock*."

These forty-two opening lines are very close to prose. Eliot has restricted their music to the faintly-scratched surface of a hibernating world—sleepy, reluctant, morose. The metre lies more like a blanket of morning mist, clinging tenuously over marsh and moor, ending with the exquisite softness of 'Oed' und leer das meer.' The sea is barren and empty.

* * * *

Madame Sosostris then cuts right across the poem in a light society vein; though bleakness still prevails, indirectly stated by "a bad cold." She is a link with the second and fourth poems.

Seventeen sinister lines follow like a heavy brush-stroke against a stormy landscape; a black hyphen of impending things! Only one line is dedicated to the packed lore contained in the fifth and tenth Tarots. These two cards reveal the presence and essence of Egyptian mythology.

Regarding the Hanged Man there seems some difference of opinion. H. T. Morley in his book, "*Old and Curious Playing Cards*," says of this card, the twelfth Tarot: "The card expresses charity, courage, knowledge and prudence as well as wisdom and fidelity. Vulcan (the Roman God of Fire) is supposed to be the god represented by the hanged man,

not only on account of the strong arm, but also because he was thrown out of heaven and lamed for life. In a pack illustrated by Count de Gebelin he is shown with his feet in the same position and fastened by one foot, but instead of hanging head downwards he is standing upright. It is said that the man represents prudence, being figured with one foot cautiously advanced before the other, which had been expressed in a Latin title as "*pede suspenso*." It is assumed that an ignorant card-marker had drawn the figure suspended by his foot instead of standing, and this has been copied by others."

Sir Gurney Benham in his book, "*Playing Cards*," says:—"The Hanging Man (Atout No. 12). This is perhaps meant for Judas Iscariot carrying two bags of money. One account says that Judas 'went and hanged himself.' In the Vulgate, the version which would be familiar to the designer, it is stated '*laqueo se suspendit*' (he hanged himself in a noose or snare). In Acts I, 18, it is said that he bought a field with the reward of his iniquity, and falling headlong he burst asunder in the midst."

Accepting the premiss that Eliot wished to deliberately by-pass this background of card mythology, there still remains one line of significant, tense meaning. Madame Sosostriis says in looking at the cards:—"I see crowds of people walking round in a ring." Well done, Madame Sosostriis! Your scheming head has one hint to give of supreme value. You have cast your lasso about humanity and brought them aimless and blind as they are, into this poem.

Eliot has staged his puppets and grafted their background and now shoulder to shoulder with Leoncavallo he opens his prelude in low, slow notes of lament, beginning:—"Unreal City, . . ."

Here is the artist's flick of the whip; the directed purpose. It is OUR city, America's city, every nation's city; unreal, aimless, hopeless!

Stetson is the name for millions of citizens who have buried reality; who are afraid to be sincere and face the truth of themselves. They have buried the priceless treasure as an inconvenient body, a hindrance to their half-guilty greed and stupidity. Afraid lest the friend of mankind (his dog) may dig it up again.

The dramatic power is sustained to the final last line, in which Eliot so honestly includes himself—"mon semblable, mon frère!"

In the background is the unmistakable echo—"Vesti la guibba"—On with the motley!

References:—

Grail. The cycle of Grail stories embody two distinct legends—
1, The quest of Percival for certain talismans, probably based on Pagan mythology; 2, The Arthurian legend of the Round Table.

"*Ritual to Romance*" (extracts only), Jessie Weston.—"There is a general consensus of evidence to the effect that the main object of the 'Quest' is the restoration to health and vigour of a king suffering from infirmity caused by wounds, sickness, or old age. Which infirmity, for some reason, reacts disastrously upon his kingdom, either depriving it of vegetation or exposing it to the ravages of war. In three cases the misfortunes and wasting of the land are the Result of War.

Adonis ritual (700 B.C.) aimed to avert temporary suspension of all productive energies of nature. In majority of the Adonis cults the main fact emerges that the 'Spirit of Vegetation' is considered as dead and the object of ceremonies is to restore life.

Conclusions: from the Fisher King: Elements form Grail legend. Setting: Nature of tasks, symbols and significance, present parallels of belief in countries widely separate, i.e., British Isles, Russia, Central Africa. Explanation: Theory of rituals presumed to give life-giving potency."

Rig Veda.—Commonly known as The Thousand and One Hymns, include Grail stories.

The Golden Bough (extracts), Sir James Frazer, F.R.S., etc.—"Osiris," the Egyptian God, in one of his aspects is the legendary God of Corn. The story that his mangled remains were scattered up and down the land, buried in different places, may be a mythical way of expressing either the sowing or the winnowing of the grain. He is also connected with Isis (his sister and wife) in the rising of the Nile waters. In the month of Khoiak the priests used to bury effigies of Osiris, made of mixed earth and corn. The Corn God produced the corn from himself; he gave his own body to feed the people. He died that they might live. The ceremony was in fact a charm to ensure the growth of the corn by sympathetic magic. Burial is sowing; resurrection is in the future crops. Similarity of worship and myths of Osiris, with Adonis, Attis, Dionysus and Demeter.

Phenomena is annual growth and decay of vegetation.

P. 61, *Line* 12 in "The Waste Land"—"Am no Russian, come from Lithuania genuine German."

P. 62, Line 31-34.—“Fresh blows the wind
Towards the Homeland
My Irish child
Where are you now?”

P. 62, Line 42.—“The sea is barren and empty.”

Notes to Madame Sosostris: “Those are pearls that were his eyes”
(*The Tempest*—Shakespeare).

The Tarot of the Bohemians (extracts). Papus. Trans: A. P. Morton.—“The Gypsy pack of cards is a great book of tradition under the name of ‘Tarot’ which has formed the basis of synthetic teachings of all the ancient nations. Although it is an amusement, it is also the key to obscure tradition. Symbolism of the Tarot equals a symbol, a number, an idea.” *Kabbalah* equals Trinity. The sacred word. *Yod-He-Vau-He*.—The Being who Is, who Was and who Will Be. *Yod*, The active principle, pre-eminent *Creator*; *He*, The passive principle, pre-eminent *Receiver*; *Vau*, The medium letter, the link which unites, *Transformer*; *He*, The passage from one world to another, *Transition*.

The Fifth Tarot. (Eliot’s note—The man with three staves).—“An Egyptian relic having relation to the triple Phallus which represents the recovery of Osiris. It corresponds to the Idea of Life, of animation.” (H. T. Morley.)

The Tenth Tarot.—The wheel represents the rise and fall of fortune. In mythology the emblem, which is one of the oldest, represents Osiris, the great Egyptian Divinity, judging the souls of the dead. The wheel is a satire on fortune. (H. T. Morley.)

The Twelfth Tarot.—The Hanged Man! Hieroglyphically the “lamed” designates the arm and therefore it is connected with anything that stretches, raises or unfolds like the arm. It has become the sign of expansion, the image of the power derived from elevation. The card expresses charity, courage, knowledge and prudence, as well as wisdom and fidelity. (H. T. Morley.)

Page 63, Line 60, cf. Baudelaire:

“Swarming city, a city full of dreams,
Where the ghosts in broad daylight stop the passers-by.”

Page 63, Line 63.—“Such a long train of spirits that I should ne’er have thought that death had despoiled so many.” (*Inferno* III, 55-57.)

Line 64.—“Here, as mine ear could note, no plaint was heard except of sighs, that made the eternal air tremble.” (*Inferno* IV, 25-27.)

Line 74. Cf. *The White Devil* by J. Webster, Act V, Sc. I.

“But keep the wolf far thence, that’s foe to men.
For with his nails he’ll dig them up again.”

The nebulous result of trying to comprehend, as a whole, a poem of such intellectual stature as “*The Waste Land*” is

as far beyond the capacity of thought as trying to visualize the grandeur of Mount Everest from the floor of the Pacific Ocean.

There are strong opinions held that this poem need not be grasped in detail. But statements are not facts. Anyone who stands at the base of a house does not see its roof until he has carefully climbed the stairs and finally stepped out on to its summit. It is only then that the full reward of panoramic vision can be obtained. The reason lies in the direct contact of the individual with the house. Similarly, in the "*1920 Poems*" and "*The Waste Land*" Eliot deliberately restricts us to direct contact with life. Human life is a close and intimate thing, at least in so far as we are concerned. The people to whom Eliot introduces us in these manuscripts are intimate, human proximities; they crush against us; their desire for life battens down upon us, like souls eagerly seeking bodies to inhabit. We cannot escape them until we reach the top of this human house with its true revelation of all the possibilities of life.

Have they not already jostled us on London Bridge and have we not acknowledged the Stetsons of life by stopping them?—

"There I saw one I knew, and stopped him crying:—'Stetson!'"

Shall we not smell the overpowering perfumes from unstopped ivory phials? Shall we not recognise a similar smell of beer permeating our very clothes with its fetid nausea? Shall we be present as the tin-opener grinds against the edge of 'food in tins' and the typewriter taps its mechanical tunes in this age of mechanism? We know we shall, because Eliot's supreme mastery of this "*our day's*" language has conjured these book-leaf people to insistent, pressing, organic life. Their proximity is so near that we feel their breath touch our cheek, and recoil from the sweat on their faces in the torchlight at Golgotha. Yes, this "*Waste Land*" is the one poem in which no single detail may be ignored and no reference left half-understood.

Eliot throws his spotlight here and there about the human ballroom, or his lighthouse flashes directions to our ships at sea.

Should we ignore these directions, assuming comfortably that Eliot is amusing himself and wasting our time?

At first I was inclined to agree with Professor Daiches that so much allusion cluttered up the poem and tended unnecessarily to trip the reader. Now I know that our very stumbling draws attention to the signals that we missed.

Who does not regard the obstacle which twists his ankle?

GAME OF CHESS

So the motley takes the stage in the first scene with "*A Game of Chess*," in which the contrasts of the living red and white pieces are as striking as those of their ivory prototypes.

The scene is rich and lovely, intent with coloured sensuousness, which is reminiscent of Keats' poetry painting in "St. Agnes' Eve." But Shakespeare and Dante also hover about Eliot's moving brush:—

"The barge she sat in like a burnished throne
Burned on the water." (Anthony and Cleopatra.)

and Eliot paints his own poetry picture in these words:—

"The chair she sat in like a burnished throne
Glowed on the marble."

Metre, in the first one hundred and ten lines is regular, in itself creating a soothing monotony in which luxury as the dominating note languishes without mental effort; thus Eliot blends sound and sight to accomplish atmosphere.

It is so noticeable throughout life that two things create a third—day and night—*Time*; two parents—*a Child*; goodness and freedom—*Unity*. Through the patterns of his poetry Eliot expresses the idea of a Trinity. In different ways all great writers do this, chief among them those of the Bible. Tagore and Santayana from almost opposite poles indicate that the combination of two forms establishes a third further form of abstract conjure. Tagore gives a clear example—"There is a bond of harmony between our two eyes which makes them act in unison." We could enlarge this by saying they give us a third perception of visual capacity beyond the scope of either eye used independently.

While Santayana describes the 'nunc stans' (now abiding) in the following lines:—"There is no contribution of experience that need be excluded from recollection, but the new total at each moment forms a new object, caught in a new intuition.") This is what Eliot means when he speaks of the

co-related objective,' and it is of paramount importance that this vital key is fully understood in its application to his work.

Like a crystal cut in hexakis-octahedron, the pattern of one forms the side of another. The atmosphere of the room staged for "*The Game of Chess*," with its jewels, ivory, pungent scents and firelight flickering in orange and green 'from sea-wood fed with copper' has the further facet of its owner. So another pattern is involved with the first; (one of hysteria and consequent fear of anything not understood; an artificial standard of hypocrisy) which recalls Dante's Friars from the Sixth Gulf, chanting:—

"Our bonnets gleaming bright with orange hue
are so leaden gross."

So Eliot works steadily towards the truth of the poem—"the withered stumps of time, which are told upon the wall."

Thus Time records us and Time brings our totality up to, the eternal present, the nunc stans.

With the impetuous action of the woman brushing her hair into fiery points like the head of a Medusa comes the expression of reckless defeat, followed in her conversation with her male companion. (She uses darting observations in keeping with the macabre sophistries of a Madame Sosostriis.) Then comes the odd double attack of her male companion—the White Knight—"I think we are in rats' alley, where the dead men lost their bones." (The precision and deadliness of the three-cornered check-mate permits no escape.)

"What shall we ever do?
The hot water at ten
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock
upon the door."

(It points to the same routine, the same monotony, the same people going round in circles, the same conclusions to unreal reality until death knocks upon the door.)

In a rather quicker vein, kept up to speed by the barman's constant reminders of "Hurry up, please, it's time," the white pieces move on the board. It is a perfect cockney setting and makes a brilliant surprise contrast to the previous game played in a setting of wealth. Though staged differently, the underlying theme is the same—"Unwanted children" instead of "hot water at ten"; "Sunday ham" in place of "a closed

car at four"; the same routine, monotony and purposeless living—"I see crowds of people walking round in a ring."

And the Upanishads say:—

"Man becomes true if in this life he can apprehend God; if not, it is the greatest calamity."

Perhaps Eliot saw calamity stalking Europe after the last war, perhaps he too 'perceived the scene and foretold the rest.'

References in "Game of Chess":—

P. 64, Line 92.—Laquearia.

—"dependent lychni laquearibus, etc."—The lighted torches hang from the golden panel of the ceilings, and the waxen lights outvie the night's darkness with their flames.

While the theme of purpose follows through from the seed to the final resurrection or completed vision of Eliot's poem (it is constant in its conception and never wavers in its concentration) the actual details of construction are separate. Each is a wheel unit, but each at the same time is enmeshed with the other wheels to form a co-ordinated working structure, travelling to a final statement. The advantage of this considerable watchfulness on the part of Eliot keeps the reader's mind alert. A very long poem with its obvious needs of being tied together artificially, is apt to find at the end of it a mind if not wholly soothed to sleep, at least comfortably unobservant and uncritical. By splitting his poem into component parts and giving each, titles that are significant signposts, Eliot is able to discard the somnambulism of stranding. The effect of this is that of an expert fencer whipping his sabre about the reader's head. The reader must either agree that he cannot fence with Mr. Eliot and retire forthwith, or he must keep every nerve taut, and a brain working at the double to defend himself.

Attention has already been drawn in *Madame Sosostriis* to the single thrusts, dealing in one line with a whole mythology. Such allusions, not exemplified, are winning points to the fencer unless the reader's knowledge can parry the attack. The debilities of an Alfred Prufrock will not help us here. It is attack! parry! defence! thrust! and a smile at Eliot in a breathless moment! Then Eliot will throw aside his sabre and say with absolute conviction that the function of a poem is not to excite!

As a poem and not poetry "*The Waste Land*" is the most exciting drama I have yet read. Foretelling any comment on poetry versus a poem:—

A Poem = Something of a nature or quality akin or likened to that of poetry.

Poetry = The expression of beautiful or elevated thought, imagination or feeling.

Eliot says:—We must be intent on what the poem points at, not on the poetry.

THE FIRE SERMON

There are two fundamental qualities upon which we must first dwell:—The burning of desire, which also purifies; and the age-old belief that water is synonymous with fertilization and procreative power.

"The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank."
(This is poetry, in spite of the above comment !)

Arthur Rackham drew trees as human people; Dante wrote of human souls imprisoned in them; and Eliot found a related objective from the same source. (By taking the hand and arm as the leaf and stem, he has related the reader intimately with the 'last fingers of leaf which clutch and sink into the wet bank.') We feel moisture as our fingers thread down into rich wet mould; our hands have become leaves; we are related so closely that falling leaves are no longer a statement or photograph, but an intense personal experience.

Having threaded his reader as a part of the poem, Eliot goes off to fetch Spenser and his 'Prothalamion' to compare what happens now with what happened in his day, when the "Sweete Themmes ranne so softly." Nymphs are become modern girls out with Directors' sons; other characters follow in Sweeney and Mrs. Porter; the Smyrna merchant and his week-end at the Metropole; the typist; the clerk; Elizabeth and Leicester; to the great tide of male and female of all ages from Carthage to Highbury.

The activities of all these people are watched by the aged Tiresias, whom legend says, because he struck a coiled male and female snake, was turned into a woman until he struck the same snakes seven years later. Tiresias (also enduring other punishments) used as a medium for the poem has the

advantage of a dual knowledge of sex. He knew their type and their quality of expression. His three hundred years of life experience found no fundamental variation except in background:—

"I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the same, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest." (Vide P. 69, L. 28.)

Behind this ability to see humanity as it really is, lurks Eliot's wayward humour. It scrambled out in "*Prufrock*" and very much later in "*Old Possum*." It is still just round the corner in "*The Waste Land*":—

"A noise of horns and hunting which shall bring
Acteon to Diana in the spring—And then!—
The sounds of horns and motors which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring"

—followed by further fun about the lavish Mrs. Porter and her daughter! There is a neat reference to the pocketful of currants; and finally the absurd silk hat on a Bradford Millionaire. All are playful jibes at human frailty.

"*The Fire Sermon*" starts in Free Verse Pastoral style, adopting a direct link with Prothalamion in the refrain—"Sweete Themmes, runne softly till I end my song." With the nightingale's interruption, free verse turns into regular rhythm, the rhythm of the modern, Western mechanical world of taxis, typewriters and food in tins.

"And I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who sat by Thebes below the wall
And walked amongst the lowest of the dead."

Life moves on for Eliot; in the past and in the present with the future contained in them. Mechanism and modern conveniences have not altered the direction of human desire or activity:—

"All things, O priests, are on fire—"

References in "*The Fire Sermon*":—

Ovid (Juno).—She demurs; they decide to ascertain the opinion of Tiresias to whom love was known in two-fold guise. For he had lashed with his stick the twin bodies of two snakes cohering in the green wood; so transformed from a man, as a woman he had passed seven years. A marvel! In the eighth year he saw

T. S. ELIOT AND THE LAY READER

the same reptiles again, exclaiming:—"If such is the power of your wife that it changes the lot of a Being to its opposite, I will strike you now." Striking the same snakes, his former shape came back and his innate appearance. So this judge, chosen on a jestful dispute, confirms the words of Jupiter; but Juno is said to have grieved beyond her right and not in fairness to the subject, and to have damned with endless darkness the eyesight of her critic, Tiresias. But the All-powerful Father (for no God may render useless the actions of a God) in place of light, thus robbed him, granted Tiresias the power of prophecy, and so mitigated his punishment by this award.

P. 72, Line 293.—

"Remember me, who am Pia
Siena made me, Maremma undid me."

The Buddha's Fire Sermon.—What Warren called the Fire Sermon is an extract from the Matravagga, which is the first and largest section of the Pali version of the Buddhist Vinaya—The canonical text of rules for monks. In expounding the rules, accounts are given of the occasions when they were annunciated by Buddha Vinaya-Pitaka, Matravagga, I., 21—Then the Blessed One, having dwelt in Uruvela as long as he wished, proceeded on his wanderings in the direction of Gaya Head, accompanied by a great congregation of 'priests' (monks or almsmen) a thousand in number, who had all of them aforetime been monks with matted hair—(Jatila, a class of ascetics). And there in Gaya, on Gaya Head, the Blessed One dwelt, together with the thousand 'priests'—And there the Blessed One addressed the priests:—

Vinaya-Pitaka—Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and Herman Oldenburg (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXIII).

And the Blessed One, after having dwelt at Uruvela as long as he thought fit, went forth to Gayasisa, accompanied by a great number of Bhikkus, by one thousand Bhikkus, who all had been Jatilas (a class of ascetics) before. There near Gaya, at Gayasisa, the Blessed One dwelt together with those thousand Bhikkus. There the Blessed One thus addressed the Bhikkus:—

"Everything, O Bhikkus, is burning.

And how, O Bhikkus, is everything burning?

The eye, O Bhikkus, is burning; visible things are burning; the mental impressions based on the eye are burning; the contact of the eye (visible things) is burning; the sensation produced by contact of the eye (with visible things), be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither pleasant nor painful, that also is burning.

With what fire is it burning?

I declare unto you that it is burning with the fire of lust, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance; it is burning with (the anxieties) of birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.

The ear is burning, sounds are burning, etc. . . .

The tongue is burning, tastes are burning, etc. . . .

The body is burning, objects of contact are burning, etc. . . .
 The mind is burning, thoughts are burning, etc. . . .

Considering this, O Bhikkus, a disciple learned in (the scriptures) walking in the Noble Path, becomes weary of the eye, weary of visible things, weary of the mental impressions based on the eye (with visible things), weary also of the sensation produced by the contact of the eye (with visible things), be it pleasant, be it painful, be it neither pleasant nor painful. He becomes weary of the ear (repeat . . . down to thoughts).

Becoming weary of all that, he divests himself of passion; by absence of passion he is made free; when he is free, he becomes aware that he is free; and he realizes that rebirth is exhausted; that holiness is completed; that duty is fulfilled; and that there is no further return to this world."

When this exposition was propounded, the minds of those thousand Bhikkus became free from attachment to the world, and were released from Asavas (i.e., Infinities' passions).

Here ends the sermon on The Burning.

DEATH BY WATER

The Fourth poem in "*The Waste Land*" brings us up shortly. We have watched the seed planted in The Burial of the Dead and seen the seed growing its crops of humanity, both in "*The Game of Chess*" and "*The Fire Sermon*." Now we are brought face to face with The Scythe.

Whatever Phlebas the Phœnician had gained now no longer counts. We are left to surmise what the résumé of his life would have been as he drowned in the whirlpool of death. Profit and loss now have other values; spiritual values, not earthly, material ones.

The spiritual values are given to us in the next poem, but one of them can be aptly quoted here. "Datta; what have we given?" "He only has freedom who ideally loves freedom for himself and is glad to extend it to others." (Tagore.)

In the camps at Belsen, Buchenwald, and wherever freedom has been denied, the heart shrinks. The victims in the German concentration camps with hearts reduced to half the normal size, are in reality the physical manifestation or betrayal of the spiritual heart of the world. The world which to-day lies sick and ill at the foot of the God of Greed can only be saved if it finds the talisman that can heal.

Tagore writes:—My experience in the West, where I have realized the immense power of money and of organised propaganda—working everywhere behind screens of camouflage;

creating an atmosphere of distrust, timidity and antipathy—has impressed me deeply with the truth that real freedom is of the mind and spirit; it can never come to us from outside."

So the wise ones patiently continue to tell us where real wealth lies, and still we worry over the baubles we scratch together with our muck-rakes.

The shortness of this fourth poem, *Death by Water*, takes us to the edge of the river of Styx. What we are meant to do is to look and to think.

But Eliot does not leave us without hope. That is why it is so impossible to call him the poet of disillusion. If the function of the artist is to transform his age, as Matthiessen writes:—" . . . the tragic writer does so not by delivering an abstract idealization of life, but by giving to the people who live in that age a full reading of its weakness and horror; yet concurrently revealing some enduring potentiality of good, of truth and courage, with a full ecstatic sense of their transfiguring glory."

So we find it is in the final poem that Eliot brings us the talisman of the Brahmins from the ancient Upanishads—*Datta*, *Dayadhvam*, *Damyata*.

WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani"—being interpreted—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The tragic beauty of this cry has not yet exhausted its far-reaching repercussion, even though the sweaty faces have long since finished their poor triumph of destruction at Golgotha, for new sweaty faces have arisen for the same purpose of yet further abysmal destruction. So it is that the words of the dying Christ are now cried by a world of nations.

But why did Eliot write "*The Waste Land*"? Was it only to point out with absolute verity the poverty and barrenness of our pretence of living? No, the mythology of the God Osiris is resurrection from the dead; and the Christian faith also teaches resurrection. The land that is sick and bereaved can become fertile in body and whole in spirit if we are able to find the Holy Grail, the talisman which can put the world right.

With the consummate skill of the great artist, Eliot has taken us back to the scene of the crucifixion. We are listening to the clamour and the agony in stony places; we are standing in the frosty silence of our own gardens; we who were once

whole and living are now dying as the Spring thunder rolls out its message:—DAMYATA, DATTA, DAYADHVAM—“Subdue yourselves—Give—Be compassionate.” And this is DA, DA, DA, which is GIVE, GIVE, GIVE. -

Two thousand years have almost passed and would the world dare to say, amidst this welter of destruction, that it had even caught a glimpse of the meaning of the word DA?

Yet it is the vital concern of every man, woman and child, whether they walk in Berlin, Moscow, Tokyo, Paris, Washington or London, to mention only a few of the many centres of civilization. The distortion of body and mind which war brings in its wake cannot hope to compete with the virility required to carry through this one grand injunction of GIVING.

Machinery, one of our great achievements, used for its rhythmic purpose, could have given the German race endless possibilities in scientific pursuit, and even the harnessing of the polar territory. To-day the world has become servant to its own iron Moloch, oiling it with human blood and feeding it with the future genius of every nation. Our prophets are left crying in the wilderness with Hieronymo (hermit):—

“Datta”—Give:—

“By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries—”

DAYADHVAM—Be compassionate—And yet Eliot is forced to write this terrible indictment:—

“I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only—”

Again the Thunder cries:—

DAMYATA—Subdue yourselves. And Eliot's response in verse acknowledges the joy that can be found when we submit ourselves to the expert guidance of real knowledge.

“Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands,

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?”

There is the invitation! Onward to the ideals, the visions and the search for the infinite plan of life, which alone can heal all tragedy and teach us the divine spirit of creation:—

The peace which passeth understanding.
“Shantih, shantih, shantih—”

References for "What the Thunder Said":—

BRIHADARANYAKA—UPANISHAD, I. II.

The triple progeny of Prajâpati, gods, men and Asuras (enemies of the gods) dwell as Brahman students with their father Prajâpati. Having passed through their studentship, the gods said:—"Speak to us, Your Worship."

He spoke to them this syllable "DA."

"Have you understood?" he said.

"We have understood," they said—"You tell us, Dâmyata, Subdue yourselves."

"Yes," he said, "you have understood."

Then the men said to him:—"Speak to us, Your Worship." And he spoke to them this same syllable "DA."

"Have you understood?"

"We have understood," said they. "You tell us Datta—Give."

"Yes," he said, "you have understood."

Then the Asuras said to him:—"Speak to us, Your Worship."

Then he spoke to them this same syllable, "DA."

"Have you understood?" he said.

"We have understood," said they. "You tell us Dayadhvam—Be compassionate."

"Yes," he said, "you have understood."

This is what the divine voice, The Thunder, repeats:—DA, DA, DA—Subdue yourselves. Give. Be compassionate.

This is the triad to be coned:—Self-subjugation. Giving. Compassion.

(Cf. Chapter V, Brahana II. By the kindness of Professor F. W. Thomas, Oxon.)

Extract from letter of Dr. Sudhin N. Ghose :—

"You will recall that the Thunder sounded in the same way and the deities, men and demons understood the voice of the Thunder in different ways. This Indian story has an early parallelism in Christian legends, as illustrated below :—

And the voice went out throughout the world . . . and each one heard it according to his capacity; old men and youths and boys and sucklings and women; the voice was to each one as each one had the power to receive it." (Shemoth R, Chap. V.)

This recalls other instances : '—in every object there is inexhaustible meaning; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing.' (Carlyle's French Revolution.)

"The present poem . . . is sufficiently intelligible to a certain class of readers without a history of the circumstances; and to a certain other class it must ever remain incomprehensible from a defect of a common organ of perception for the ideas of which it treats." (From the Advertisement of Shelley's Epipsychidion.)

"Blick ins Chaos"—Glance into Chaos. (Hermann Hesse.)
 "Already half Europe, already at least half of Eastern Europe, is on its way to chaos, driving and singing drunkenly in the way that Dmitri Karamasoff sang. The indignant Citizen laughs over these songs, the Holy Man and Prophet listens to them with tears."

P. 77, *Line* 411.—"And I heard the door under that horrible tower being shut." (*Inferno* xxxiii, 46—Dante.)

P. 77, *Line* 427.—"Now I beg of you for that valour that helps you up to the top of the ladder, to remember to alleviate my grief." (*V. Purgatorio*, xxvi, 148.)

P. 77, *Line* 428.—"Quando flam uti chelidon"—"When I become like the swallow. An account of the "*Pervigilium Veneris*" can be found in Mackail's *Latin Literature*.

P. 77.—"Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina. Quando flam uti chelidon"—O swallow, etc.

The burden of the Swallow's song in the *Pervigilium Veneris* (i.e.,

The Eve of St. Venus) was—"Cras amet qui nunquam amavit, quique amavit cras amet"—To-morrow shall be love for the loveless, and for the lover to-morrow shall be love.—The complete verse in which "*uti chelidon*" appears, that is literally, "When I become like the swallow," is: "She sings, we are mute; when is my spring coming? When shall I be as the swallow, that I may cease to be voiceless?—I have lost the Muse in silence, nor does Apollo regard me: so Angelae, being mute, perished by silence." "To-morrow shall be love, etc."—Genesis and nature of the *Pervigilium Veneris*.

(Walter Pater):—It originated in the refrain of a popular chorus, which Flavian, the chosen friend of his hero Marius, had heard sounding all over the town of Pisa one April night, on the eve of the sacred day when, from that town, as from many another harbour on the Mediterranean, the ship of Isis (the new rival of Venus) put out to sea, devoted a sacrifice to the great goddess.

(Cecil Clement):—It was a nuptial hymn, taking its thought from nature as the universal mother. It celebrated the preliminary pairing and mating together of all fresh things in the hot and genial springtime. The soul of spring united with the earth. The theme of the poem is Spring, and with it the burden of that 'to-morrow' to which vigil is consecrated.

Haunting refrain of the poem—sigh half-scoff, prophesying the dawn of love for the loveless. (Mackail.)

P. 77, *Line* 431.—"Why then I'll fit you"—Kyd's "*Spanish Tragedy*," Act IV, Scene 1. Hieronimo, the Marshal of Spain, says: "Why

then I'll fit you; say no more," meaning that he will produce a play giving them suitable parts to act.—Thomas Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" is presumed to have been performed and licensed in 1592—"and brought in great profits, often £3 and more."—The origin of this plot, of the play within a play, seems to have come through Henry Wotton's "Courtly Controversy," 1578, translated from Jacques Iver's "Printemps d'Iver," 1572. Shakespeare's "Hamlet" appears to have been registered in 1602. Both plays share the medium of a Ghost calling for revenge on the murdered victim. In the case of the "Spanish Tragedy" it is the father Jeronimo or Hieronymo who, nearly mad with sorrow for his callously-murdered son, pretends madness as a shield until his vacillating revenge is finally staged and carried out by means of a play portraying the truth of all that had caused his son's death. In Shakespeare's "Hamlet" it is the son who pretends madness until he has revenged his father's murder, also through the staging of a true play.

THE NATURE OF ELIOT'S POETRY

IN "*Prufrock*" we find some of the best examples of Eliot's use of Imagery, but not in the glittering, adamant framework of the Orthodox Imagists. In . . . "certain half-deserted streets"—"The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes" and the now famous quotation:—"I have measured out my life with coffee spoons"—are found monumental images that tower in the mind. But they have not hit the mind with a metallic blow from the hammer. Instead, we find these images hovering and clinging about us in a rather friendly way. It would barely surprise us, if the fog for instance, were to uncurl itself in its warm friendliness, to skim smoothly through the muttering retreats to guide us to our destination. Even the coffee spoons seem to hold a liquid conversation in their bowls and a familiar tinkling voice which seems to say:—"What, you again, *Prufrock*!"

Here is the difference. These images are not static, hard or brittle; they stretch themselves and yawn in quite an amusingly human way. When reading "*Prufrock*" I often long to escape the tedious company, to surreptitiously raise the window and slip my hand out secretly to stroke that rather nice curling fog.

{ Just in the way that Eliot could never be an orthodox

Imagist, neither can he be a strict Humanist. Because while he has profound sympathy with mankind and forever visualizes those things that lie beyond the human form, yet he never makes the mistake of attempting reformation; knowing too well that "the incentive must come from the soul's self." (Browning.)

Though we have not sailed the poetic sea of the Prufrock poem in a Spanish galleon, dressed with flags and bulging sails of rhetorical idealism, but have rather rowed a homely boat; nothing has occurred as yet to upset it. But when the "*1920 Poems*" bear down on us with their sudden squall of realism, our venturesome craft ships water so fast that it nearly sinks.

What accounts for this sudden stark Realism? Perhaps the year in Paris, 1910-11, when Eliot studied French Realism and then found it capped by Realism in practice during the 1914-18 war, had its effect on a sensitive mind. People at war find their latent kindnesses and concealed cruelties are not hidden so easily, and Eliot would have seen many manifestations of these human traits. Whatever it was, the shock was registered unmistakably.

On Eliot's totem pole, painted in crude, brazen colours, we now carve Realism above the figures of Imagery and Humanism.

Let us turn the pages of his poems to 1922, to scan three lines in "*The Fire Sermon*" where we find a complete example of the use of all three—Imagism, Humanism, Realism:—

"White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dark garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year."

Humanism in its pathetic lowliness in the damp and cold Imagism in the coffin, as a low dark garret. Realism in the horror of contact with the merciless feet of rats.

! The "*1920 Poems*" marked a crisis in Eliot's style. From this point he seems to have halted to revise his position and to meditate where he was going. Bewildered by the clamour of man's mechanical devices; tangled in the labyrinth of man's divergent beliefs; overwhelmed by the seeming futility and repetition of anything humanity achieved, with its brutal quarrels and selfish behaviour; Eliot turned back along the road of civilization; searching each step on his way through the annals of man's primitive strivings, seeking some deeper lines cut into the rocks of TIME.

What gave man that slight advance beyond his nearest relative, the Gibbon?

The Gibbon uses articulated sounds for communication; it nurses the old and sick; it teaches its offspring social friendliness and it organizes communal singing. But it had no organized community or collective focus.

The Gibbon's nearest relative *Homo Sapiens* had, however, the further gift of memorizing and recording experience. This historic sense, which we call tradition, was responsible for the growing, if crude certainty, that some force outside his own actual experience lay behind his existence. He discovered that all his needs were supplied in raw material; he began to recognize cause and effect; and eventually he stumbled on an 'imagined' God: some master brain which foresaw everything, and supplied his food! The vicissitudes of this God have followed tangled and tortuous tracks, but in every race has survived and kept the helm.

¹ From the final poem in "*The Waste Land*" up to this year of 1945, Eliot has not deviated from his adherence to a God. In reaching this conclusion, another has been established:—The unifying principle of a Trinity. The Earth, a physical manifestation; Humanity, the medium of interpretation; God, the inspiration. Such is the co-relation of earth and man, which makes the comprehension of God possible.

In ancient writings there is a reference to the third eye of the God of all emotion, which suggests a further contact, or that the centre of emotion may be some other, distant sphere of existence. But we know enough to realize that it permeates every movement. All stillness; all comprehension; and we call it GOD.

To Think, is emotion; to Love, is emotion; to Kill; to Invent; to Hate; to do anything that we do do; or to refrain from doing; is all EMOTION. It ranges from an infant's first cry, to the greatest tragedy or triumph of recorded life. Therefor we hear the logical statement of Christ:—"Before Abraham was, I am."

POETIC FORM

SOME people say they believe that modern poets use Free Verse because they are not sufficiently gifted to use any of the

recognized metres. Yet is it so very difficult or impossible to sit down and write a poem in any of the quatrains, or the more exacting septet—ABABBCC? What poet, if he chose, could not master a formula, with a little patience! What has really to be borne in mind is that every verse-form has already collected its corresponding reward in masterpieces. To continue saying things in the same phraseology would create a habit, and every formed habit lessens the demand made upon thought. A somnambulistic state probably enriches romantic poetry, but for metaphysical poetry it is fatal to feel sleepy.

Robert Browning (born in 1812) began to throw off a new sport from the overwhelming stem of the Tennysonian era. He was followed by Walt Whitman (born in 1819), Rabindranath Tagore (born in 1861) and Thomas Stearns Eliot (born in 1888). These poets realised that Tennyson's mastery of style had squeezed out the last possible drop that could be extracted from the romantic orange and that a new medium must be explored if vitality was to remain in poetry. In spite of conservatism, these poets began to write in the natural language of their day:—" . . . For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice." (*Little Gidding*.)

By the time Eliot was born, much heavily-crustured orthodoxy had been ploughed and its ground visibly friable. It was left to Eliot to establish the right of Free Verse as an accepted form.

The ultimate outcome was the birth of the musical phrase in poetry. One poetic phrase overlapped by the balance of another, just as Chopin took his musical sentences from one key into another, developing a simple theme into cathedrals of music.

Free Verse depends, not on formulæ, but on the genius of the poet in hearing a cadence of words balanced as a whole.

Certain lighter words are gathered or bunched together against heavier words of portentous presence, so that the completed thought can sweep to its goal without its carriage sagging in the middle, or drooping at the end.

"Every popular song has at least one line or sentence that is perfectly clear—the line that FITS THE MUSIC." (E. Pound.)

The line that FITS THE THOUGHT is the one essential of modern free-verse writing. But Eliot does not linger here. To his balanced form he adds balanced thinking. That is,

thought running in opposite directions, so that the balancers each side of the scale must contain an equal power of oppositional thinking. While this can be observed in "*Prufrock*," it is developed to a fine art in all Eliot's country poems ("*Four Quartets*"). That the setting of these poems is found either in the country or by the seashore shows Eliot's instinct for a background that can be moulded to impending figures in the foreground. Everything in nature is in flux. Development and recession balancing at the still point. With backgrounds such as these, Eliot does not need to put movement into them by means of golden cupidons and ivory phials. The substance is already there in the richest colours and varied texture.

The form of Free Verse enables such an expert poet as Eliot to slide from the Didactic into Spenserian or Sapphic metre with the objects of his thought, and pass again with these thoughts into natural Twentieth Century rhythm. Free Verse means that the style and the thought must move together as one complete vision.

Words, or the clothing of thought, is one of Eliot's greatest gifts; he is uncontent until the exact word wraps about the thought. The refraction of words is focussed to the emergence of the exact meaning (in so far as the collection of words used by one brain can ultimately achieve a particular field of vision). Other poets will combine other shades of words and succeed no less, but the genius of a poet's mind is its infinitesimal combinations of sound in relation to the range of ideas. He only succeeds who can fold the fine film of a sheath about the sacred Gods of thought.

"What means the fine music
Of the dry cicada,
Through the long noon hours
Of the autumn stillness,
Who can say?" (Sappho.)

How unbelievably beautiful are these thoughts echoing from the film of life six hundred years before Christ lived his poem upon earth.

THE CO-RELATED OBJECTIVE.—

"When one straight line stands on another, so as to make the adjacent angles equal to one another, each of the angles is called a right angle."

So Eliot takes two impressions to create a third impression in which the two first are contained. Thus we return to the

principle of a Trinity:—One and two *makes three*. The father, the son and the holy ghost, *again three*. Night and Day create a third sense of *Time*. By combining two known objects a third identity comes within perception and feeling.

WORDS.

The following examples are sufficient to show the importance with which Eliot regards the power of words, and the strength of his concentration on their exact use. They are like the polished stones of the Canyon;—

"Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence." (*Burnt Norton*.)

"Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish.
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still." (*Burnt Norton*.)

"For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice."
(*Little Gidding*.)

TECHNIQUE

Let us then pull on the surgeon's gloves and select from a glittering tray our scalpel and trephine and have our patient "etherised upon a table!" No. 3 in the Rock Choruses shows many examples of the balanced sentence and word order as used by Eliot, because the work of choral poetry has to be simple in purpose, and therefore cruder in form than the developed design given to a single voice. Many phrases begin the same way and, therefore, cut a deep channel from which attention does not escape:—

"I have given you hands *which you turn from worship*,
I have given you speech *for endless palaver*,
I have given you my Law *and you set up commissions*,
I have given you lips *to express friendly sentiments*.
I have given you hearts *for reciprocal distrust*.
I have given you power of choice *and you only alternate*
Between futile speculation *and unconsidered action*."
(*Rock Choruses*.)

The cumulative effect of this cardinal thinking provokes a demand for the culmination of each opening thrust.

When studying Eliot, those people who know America fairly well will realise that it becomes increasingly urgent to read him as an American and not an English poet. In any nation it is always the thought behind the thought that is fundamental.

The appeals of all nations have been centralized in recent years in America, and as an immediate result of this its people have developed a quadrilateral way of thinking, from which they extract what they hope will be the kernel. By doing this they avoid excessive emotions of either hate, or admiration, and also that depressing ancestral ghost, which binds a race to do what its grandfathers did, whether what they did is suitable to present requirements or not. It is also wise to remember that the American is never a hustler, except in non-essentials. Over vital decisions he takes time to be correct before starting out:—

"There will be time to murder and create
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate."
(*Mr. Prufrock.*)

Such as this was never an Englishman's thought, or a Frenchman's:—

"Briques et tuiles
O les charmants
Petits asiles
Pour les amants!" (Verlaine.)

Eliot's American descent (from Andrew Eliot of East Coker, Somerset, who settled in Massachusetts in the late seventeenth century) has had its influence on the action of his style. We do not find the orthodox stress of metre, regardless of vowel length, or a standard pattern faithfully performed from the initial stanza. We find instead, musical chords; panoramic music; tidal music. We see the "Minute Man of New England" with his alert awareness of the freedom for which he fought, reiterated in the instinct for poetic freedom for which Eliot, with others, also fought. It is this difference in the background of the meaning of the same language which makes it necessary to read Eliot in American, and not English.

So to return to Eliot's traditional music with a fuller understanding, I quote from a poem, "MARINA," which to my mind he has never surpassed in balanced beauty:—

'What seas, what shores, what grey rocks and what islands
What water lapping the bow
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog.
What images return
O my daughter."

It is impossible to read this without the swell of the ocean's tide, its receding, and again its rise and fall:—

"What is the face, less clear and clearer
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger
Given or lent more distant than the stars and nearer than the eye
Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep where all the waters meet." (*Marina*.)

These last two lines hold the receding wave, threading back through the pebbles which are the leaves of the shore. Listen to its muted music, withdrawing to the matrix, the source of its Being. Consider its word economy in relation to the purport of the subject, then the direct application; also its liquid alliteration and internal rhyming, creating an undertow of rhythm, which with balanced sentences presents one of the most beautiful counterpoints Eliot has ever written. ★

The "1920 Poems" contain much of the spade work for the "Waste Land" and also much experimental metre.

In "Gerontion" there is Realism of a high order, though still unorthodox and written of course in Free Verse.

"Burbank with a Baedeker" is written in the quatrain, ballad form. That is, the second and fourth lines rhyming, and the first and third, unrhymed. It has the character cartoons rapidly sketched of some of those who will figure in the "Fire Sermon."

"Sweeney Erect" is again in the quatrain ballad; and Sweeney appears named though not characterized in the "Fire Sermon":—

"The sound of horns and motors which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the Spring."

"Le Directeur" is a play on sound endings, but the pattern is not regular though it begins A.BBBB.

"Mélange Adultère de Tout" begins with the first and third lines and second and fourth rhyming, but continues irregular rhyming from the first four lines, thus:—A.B.A.B.C.C.D.E.F. G.G.G.H.H.H.D.J.K.K.J.

"Lune de Miel."—I cannot help wanting to call this an Eliot Sonnet. A Free Verse Sonnet (if such a thing is possible) written upon the theme of a cheap continental honeymoon trip. The purport is the agelessness of the Byzantine Church standing amidst its stones (with the classic Corinthian leaf carved on its pillars, as a mark of distinction) compared to a hasty scramble across the Continent by two young people who find themselves too exhausted to go and see this ancient basilica. It is a comparison of movement with immobility.

Its lay-out and completeness falls naturally within the folds of the sonnet, though neither Petrarchian or Shakespearian form is actually in the original.

"*Dans le Restaurant*" goes back to Free Verse Realism and ends with Phlébas the Phénicien, which is the French replica of "*Death by Water*." The fourth poem in "*The Waste Land*."

The Quatrain in various forms dominates the rest of the "*1920 Poems*," and it is interesting to pick out the parts of characters which will appear woven together, alive and breathing in "*The Waste Land*."

In "*The Fire Sermon*" the poem moves easily into Spenserian, Sapphic and Didactic verse as the meaning of the poem travels its course; and in "*Ash Wednesday*" there is a lovely Dactylic movement in the poem beginning:—Lady of silences

— — — — —
Calm and distressed
— — — — —

One most attractive device of Eliot's is the doubling of a word, which enhances and propels the tone value of a line, giving it musical emphasis and the impetus of increased volume.

Ex.:—" . . . though I do not wish to wish these things."
(" *Ash Wednesday* ")

Alliteration and onomatopœia are common to all poets and are as much the varying life of poetry as extra sharps and flats revivify the life of music and are common to all composers. Eliot's constant use of long beats

Spondee — —
Molussus — — —
Dispondee — — — —

develops very fully from "*Ash Wednesday*" onwards, to his latest poems. "*The Four Quartets*" show that in his music there is a slow stately rhythm, partly religious intoning and partly the under-beat of the sea. It contributes indisputably to the eternal comprehension of a world set above the stage of development and understanding existent here. Unmoved by any human exigencies, the matrix of all life lies in the sea and remains a deep abiding strata of life-giving plasm. Here Eliot touches the root-fibre of both man's existence and his natural faiths. Man, whether he is right or wrong in what

he does, is stabilized by the sea with its lasting life-rhythms.

The thoughts of humanity change so quickly. At the end of a train journey do we leave the carriage with the same thoughts with which we first boarded our compartment? With so many precarious attributes given play in life, Eliot's instinctive "*sea-rhythm*" would, of all others, be best constituted to convey the deepest, underlying sympathy with every emotion.

It is this, perhaps, which accounts most for the richness, the quietness, and the restraint of Eliot's recent work.

He may hold the theory that poetry should not excite, but he has certainly been unable to put it into practice. We may say, Surely "*The Four Quartets*" are quiet enough. But, are they? What lover of nature is not filled with intense wonder and thanksgiving for the very promise of fulfilment contained in this reasoned, reliable architecture, built from barren-earth, the crumbling of houses, the sullen river and mid-winter spring.

There is one last technique to mention; the most important, the most illusive; and the only one which distinguishes any one poet from another. Because, once a special form has been established every poet can use its structure as a model without being called a copyist, there must be some further hall-mark of identification. It is this:—

The nature of a man's thinking arbitrarily selects his sound pressures (words). This is very easily detected if you listen to the diction of the tenants of any Embassy, Medical Profession, Military College, University or Industry. In every case the choice of words is governed by the job—with its environment; with its nature; with its nomenclature. This is only a broad stepping stone to help people to realize that those same laws of selectivity apply to poets. The trend of a poet's thought classifies itself in the same ways, though with very much finer perception. It should be possible without knowing a poem to hear it read and name the writer. (I remember once being awfully proud because I was the only one to get Ogden Nash!)

Every poet, as every individual, has his own dictionary inside his head, and his own group compilation. It is then the very nature of Eliot's thought, converted into sound, which can press a word that might be a Trochee, into a Spondee. We walk as we think; merrily, sadly, hastily, angrily, thoughtfully. Even a ballet dancer cannot suddenly break into fouettés without preparation. A poet similarly writes as he

thinks, and when a poet is a genius, his word pressures cling like spun webs; Magic Clothes about a Magic Weaver.

"Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
Under sleep, where all the waters meet." (*Marina*)

TRANSITIONAL POEMS

FROM "*The Hollow Men*" written in 1925 to "*The Difficulties of a Statesman*" in 1932 are to be found perhaps the most human of Eliot's poems. He has passed from the brilliant, agile scholarship of "*Prufrock*," in which the recording of observation plays the main part and has not yet developed the pancreative conception of his fluid and purest poetry.

There is rebellion in these poems, as though he pleaded not to tread the path leading before him. The path strewn with the history of human flowers; the gladness, the mistakes and the sorrows that lay tangled together over the track that any wanderer treads, who seeks to fathom the meaning of the manifestation of Life.

"*The Hollow Men*" will present little difficulty to those readers who have not made any special study of Eliot's Works. It is the grey canvas of "No-man's Land" between death and the life to come, in the air that surrounds the Isle of Purgatory.

But in "*Ash Wednesday*" the figuration needs closer observation and fully justifies Charles Maurras' statement:—"The thought, that is the style too." For the poetic form of "*Ash Wednesday*" is ecclesiastic in pitch and intoning phrase, while the thought is a continual revolving in the mind, of good and evil.

The poem starts with a literal translation from Guido * Cavalcanti:—

"Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope
Because I do not hope to turn—"

From the basis of these rhythms the rest of the poem takes shape and colour. In the opening poem the worry of the subject is present:—

"These matters that with myself I too much discuss"

—indicates the restraint that any form of rebuke awakens in the sensitive mind.

In the service of Ash Wednesday the priest dips his thumb in the ashes of the burnt palm of the previous Palm Sunday and marking the forehead of those who approach, intones these words:—"Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

It is one of the very oldest of the rituals. The theme leads directly into the second poem based on Ezekiel, Chapter 37:—

"Thus, saith the Lord God unto these bones. Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." (Verse 5, from The Vision of Dry Bones.)

Possibly hovering about the idea of Dante's Three Beasts (the leopard, lion and she-wolf) guarding Hell, Eliot writes with a versatility and insight which in some aspects is a curious masterpiece in psychological art. He writes entirely from the aspect of the bones themselves.

The Third poem in "*Ash Wednesday*" passes out of the valley to the winding stair, which is Eliot's modernized form of Dante's ascent through Purgatory. Its staging is the dark winding stair of an old castle; as the poet climbs the worn steps he smells the fetid atmosphere almost always associated with Artillery Towers:—

"There were no more faces and the stair was dark,
Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drivelling beyond repair,"

—Through the stairway's slotted window he catches sight of magnetic, earthly pleasures, drawing him earthward. The hawthorn blossom and pastoral scene, with a figure in blue and green, playing a flute, and there is the thought of brown hair and distraction. Then the 'strength beyond hope and despair' brings us to the Fourth Poem, reminiscent of Canto 28 in The Purgatory.

Number Five in "*Ash Wednesday*" reverts to the to and fro movement again:—

"Will the veiled sister pray for
Those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee—"

Then the last of this series, while still retaining the turning movement, rebels against the strict injunction of the Angel at the door of Purgatory:—

"Enter, but this warning hear;
He forth again departs who looks behind." (Dante.)

Eliot's absolute integrity shows through the weariness and the struggle:—

"though I do not wish to wish these things
From the wide window towards the granite shore
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
Unbroken wings
And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell."

Ah well, I for one sinner am glad that he caught that fleeting loveliness, and took us through the wide window towards those things that God made beautiful and free. The rhythm of the sea, the pure air and the white sails, seem a very practical way of sense-perception-usage. Our spirit knows only those things derived through the senses in which it becomes knowledgable.

It seems in "*Ash Wednesday*" that Eliot has deliberately pointed to life as a plastic plane capable of containing Hell, Purgatory or Paradise, as we choose to make it.

Is it not significant that the final poem pleads with the Divine:—

"Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood"

—and finishes with the finding of God, in the spirit of the sea.

References:—

"Perch'io non spero di torna grammai" (Guido Cavalcanti).
Literally, "Because I do not hope to turn again."

Slotted window—used for shooting a cross-bolt or arrow horizontally.

ARIEL POEMS

"The Journey of the Magi" and the other poems in this group are a series of remembered pictures blended with an imagination which could return to the days of the actual happenings in the Bible, and bring them into the present. They create once more a sense of time as all the time.

"*A Song for Simeon*."—I suppose almost everyone has had the experience of an arbitrary conclusion. As a child the canticle that I loved most was the "Nunc Dimittis" (Now,

Lord). In fact I have been to hear that lovely song sung for itself alone; always absolutely certain in my child mind that it was spoken by the Mother of Jesus after the crucifixion. I give no excuse, because there isn't one, but I wrote about Eliot's poem as based on Simeon, the second of the twelve tribes of Israel. No wonder we didn't agree! Mr. Eliot wrote back, "Try Luke II, 29!" I tried Luke, and found there are few things picturing greater significance than a new life in the arms of life-worn tolerance and experience. Eliot has painted this picture in his first two lines:—

"Lord, the Roman hyacinths are blooming in bowls and
The winter sun creeps by the snow hills;"

—So the end and the beginning are eternally together.

"Let the Infant, the still unspeaking and unspoken Word,
Grant Israel's consolation
To one who has eighty years and no to-morrow."

"*Animula*."—A poem in two parts, with a similar opening phrase.—First in aspect of birth and child-simplicity, and then in aspect of matured life.

"Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul."

and in the second half:—

"Issues from the hand of Time, the simple soul—
Irresolute and selfish, mis-shapen, lame—"

The following explanation will set the minds of many readers at rest, who have failed to make any connection with the names used in this poem. Perhaps Mr. Eliot will not entirely blame us for reaching that state of mind which sees points of gravity in the smallest references. Points of gravity have lain in almost nonchalant allusions; and so with some surprise to oneself, a sense of the bloodhound running up every track has been developed unawares.

"As for the references about which you ask in the poem *Animula* . . . the third of these figures is so entirely imaginary that there is really no identification to be made, though perhaps it may suggest not wholly irrelevantly to some minds certain folklore memories. Of the first two, it is only necessary to say they represent different types of career, the successful person of the machine age and someone who was killed in the last war." (T.S.E.)

I must admit that Guiterriez stranded me in Spain. That Boudin was some mythical French king of the Dark Ages, and that Floret was a warrior in some fairy tale I should have known and didn't; or was possibly a reference to Florio, the

translator of Montaigne. Though one should not worry over detail too much, there is also some anxiety that vital references may not be lost.

"*Marina*." Hercules Furens—"What place is this, what region, what quarter of the earth?" (Seneca.)

Sometimes the silky body of the native diver, lithely cutting the ocean waters, brings back by good fortune a pearl of great price. Sometimes, too, the poet in a moment of swift vision brings back words that can encompass a living flame.

Blake's "Tiger, Tiger, burning bright" and Tennyson's "Break! Break! Break!" are not only the form of the pearl, but its folded light and transfigured depths. So also in "*Marina*" Eliot caught the elusive flame suspended among words, as a pearl suspends its changing light.

The music of the words is sea-poetry, with the taste of salt in the fog. The meaning of the words is sea-inevitability, compelled in the sound of its rhythmic tides.

"Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog" (from Psalm xxii, 20) is the oncoming wave which breaks against the shores of life and recedes to the line—"meaning death."

The next wave of ambition and extravagance follows, to recede with the lull—"meaning death."

Satiety and sexuality also crash on to the shore with the same rush and receding. All these things are tried but found unsubstantial. Then gradually the soul's self evolves in the full tide, the pulse of the arm growing stronger and the face imaging God; gathering half-consciously, "—under sleep where all the waters meet."

Are they given or lent?

Eliot seems to show that this life is lent, for with a flash of understanding, brilliant as the sun's sparkle across the restless sea, he points to the old ship sailing, with garboard strake leaking and the life-seams that need caulking. But it shall sail the troubled seas and reach the further shore, where the new ship for the new life may be waiting for the voyage beyond.

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known." (Corinthians, xiii.)

So we hear Eliot's voice coming through the fog that folds about man's soul-experience:—

"What seas, what shores, what granite islands towards my timbers
And woodthrush calling through the fog
My daughter."

Had Eliot written no other poem, this alone was a golden key of poetry; a pearl of great price.

References for Ariel Poems:—

"Ariel"—N.B., Ariel was the name given to a series of Christmas Poems published over a period of years to which other poets contributed and does not refer to these poems in particular.

References for "The Journey of the Magi":—

From the text of a sermon, preached before James I on Christmas Day, 1621, by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. The sermon was on the text—Matthew ii., 1 and 2.

"... In their coming we consider: 1st, the distance of the place they came from. . . . this was a riding many a hundred miles, and cost them many a day's journey. 2nd, we consider the way that they came, if it be pleasant, or plain and easy; for if it be, it is so much the better. (i. This was nothing pleasant, for through deserts, all the way waste and desolate. ii. Nor secondly easy either; for over the rocks and crags of both Arabias, specially Petrae, their journey lay.) 3rd, yet if safe—but it was not, but exceeding dangerous, as lying through the midst of the 'black tents of Kedar' (Cant. i, 5) a nation of thieves and cut-throats, etc. . . . —No passing without great troop or convoy. 4th, last we consider the time of their coming, the season of the year. It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and especially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off in solstitio brumali, 'the very dread of winter' . . ."

Animula.—A living being endowed with sensation and voluntary movement.

Purgatorio—"l'animia semplicita, che sa nulla."

Marina.—The heroine of Shakespeare's "Pericles." Title quotation from Seneca.

Garboard strake equals the first range of planks laid upon a ship's bottom near the keel.

CORIOLAN

1. TRIUMPHAL MARCH

THE twin poems, No. 1 "Triumphal March" and No. 2 "Difficulties of a Statesman," are two poems which quite easily explain themselves, so that in writing about them there is a

certain claim for a sense of indulgence. But supposing, quite unexpectedly, someone should ask what short poems of this writer's work could be termed "typical," then these two poems must have careful consideration.

The words "typically Eliot" at once come forward for debate.

What is typical of Eliot? What do we associate with him or any other poet if it comes to that? We associate with any poet those qualities we seek when we take a work down from the bookshelf. I would call this a subconscious selection, possibly a choice that we have never analysed thoroughly. So for what I am going to write I have prepared the ground by calling it an *indulgence*, i.e., purely my own view and so not necessarily shared by other readers. If I take out Browning, I find myself in need of vigorous, healthy, forthright thinking. If Blake, it is to seek the pure flame of burning spirit; if John Donne, it is to read of familiar, friendly living, recorded in a new way; if Shakespeare, it is to read his historical plays. Thus one could go on through volume after volume of poets' work. But with Shakespeare's historical plays we have located our quarry—*Coriolanus*.

In what way do we expect Eliot will handle this historic character who despised the common people? At once we find ourselves in Eliot's psychological laboratory, with his most powerful lens focussed on the behaviour of a people who are already witnessing this processional spectacle. Acutely observed facts are immediately perceptible, like the fine cilia on a paramecium, which become visible to the human eye only with the aid of the microscope. It is typical of Eliot to throw the features of his characters on to a focussed screen by means of contrast. This is the reason that so much of the poem concentrates on mental behaviour, observations and standards, of the crowd in relation to the few brief, but powerful lines, allotted to the chief character, Coriolan.

The beat of the poem has borne the heavy, steady stream of equipment, horses and endless nobodys with endless reasons for inclusion in this triumphal march to the glory of Coriolan's achievement on the battlefield. Eliot has included our own processions, too, mentioning modern aeroplanes, but differing nowise from those of Rome. The same proletariat is there, in the same good-natured way, with paper bags, cigarette-ends, sausages; with coloured trumpets, paper streamers, rattles, flags and bunting. Quips, buffoonery and cheers swell

the hubbub and heighten the excitement through hours of waiting. Into this field, Coriolan eventually moves. Quiet, impenetrably aloof, with observant eyes gravely noting the baubles, gew-gaws and raucous mouth-calls. From his horse he foresees the littered empty streets which will later remain a testimony to this moment of boisterous praise. The poor coloured froth of a multitude's empty excitement returning to the dust from which it originated!

But has Eliot stopped at the moment of full-throated Hurrahs?

No! He has moulded our perception to the vision of human feelings. Through the eyes of Coriolan he has seen another procession in "*Time*." Not 491 B.C., but that of Christ himself. Cyril with his parents (typical of any family at any historic period) are sheltering in a church on Easter Day, waiting for the rain to stop. When the Communion bell rings the three strokes in memory of Christ's gift to humanity, Cyril thinks of the muffin vendor with his bells and says:—"Crumpets" (right out loud). The significance of the simple word "crumpets" contains the complete analysis of crowd-thinking. Achievement and sacrifice is lost amongst the tawdriness of greed and symbols. The multitude has no comprehension of life's directive portent, it slides like a skater across the innocent surface of fathoms.

This piercing scrutiny of Eliot's, so typical of his work, does not stop at observation and photographic impression; but reaches a standard of construction, the presentation of which establishes him as a profound master of his art.

"The Difficulties of a Statesman," the twin poem to "Coriolan," underlines the same irrelevances; the same defeative power of mob-thought, which, like a bull, rushes with lowered head and closed eyes.

The kindness, patience and tolerance of such an observer of life's many mistakes must, by these same qualities, rebuke those who would rashly label him 'disillusioned' or alternatively claim him as their prerogative for Academic Rights.

Through the thick fog; the impenetrable heights; the lowered head and shut eyes—can we, the multitude, realize that 'gain' must be changed into 'give'? Can we go into reverse and hear Christ once more, saying:—"Give all that thou hast and follow me"? Such is the teaching of Eliot and such is typical of all that he has written.

THE ROCK CHORUSES

THE pivot of the Army is often said to be the Sergeant-Major; and in the Senior Service the Warrant Officer is perhaps a similar focal point, where officers link with men and are welded by a unifying agent.

This point of fusion applies to every functioning body; for somewhere within the cycle of operations is the place of balance.

The idea seems to fit Eliot's work too; for we find in this pageant poem, "*The Rock Choruses*," an atmosphere balanced between all his first energetic, experimental building and all his later, intricate architecture. If we might give an example in reply to Eliot's own lecture on "*What is a Classic?*" we might find the answer here in this poem: neither before or after, but the still point of fusion.

For any reader to comprehend a poem as a whole it must be fully understood, both within and without. An orange is not comprehended beyond the outline of its form, unless the observer has a mental vision of its inner composition. This one poem of Eliot's contains the *within and without* of the *before and after* in his work. Some may think that to include *after* while Eliot still lives is an arbitrary postulate. But to assume that an architect (having built his castle from its foundation to half its height) will not complete his work with cardboard bricks, or roof it with circus tents, is, after all, a reasonable assumption.

So we can safely say that we can gauge the content as well⁶ as visualize the contour of this crystallized pattern. The classic moment of Eliot's poetry.

If we look back through the poems, which are the lines which jump from their framework to shake us by the hand, like old friends who have met before?

First the eagle from "*Prométhée Mal Enchaîné*" (André Gide):—"Why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?" This same eagle which passed its shadow upon Ash Wednesday now hovers above the first line of "*The Rock Choruses*":

"The eagle soars in the summit of Heaven."

Then follows another familiar setting:—

"I journeyed to London, to the time-kept City,
Where the River flows, with foreign flotations"

—which carries us back to those lovely lyrical lines in "*The Burial of the Dead*":—

"Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many."

Further on we glimpse another familiar phrase:—

"I will show you the things that are now being done,
And some of the things that were long ago done,
That you may take heart."

Can we not feel Eliot's hand once more on our sleeve as he says:—

("Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you,
I will show you fear in a handful of dust."

—to-day, with the atomic bomb, could we read anything more prophetic?

Then the nymphs come back again as we read:—

"... But every son would have his motor-cycle,
And daughters ride away on casual pillions."

The same thought was spoken before in "*The Fire Sermon*":—

"The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses."

Isn't the solitary cry of "Unreal City" embodied in this foreboding?:—

"Can you keep the City that the Lord keeps not with you?"

In "*Marina*" we find:—

"Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog meaning Death."

And we can compare it with:—

"Men! Polish your teeth on rising and retiring;
Women! Polish your finger nails:
You polish the tooth of the dog and the talon of the cat."

In the seventh poem we find thoughts written that will be used later in "*Little Gidding*":—

"And among his hearers were a few good men,
Many who were evil,
And most who were neither,
Like all men in all places. . ."

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And most who were neither,
Like all men in all places. . . ."

These, then, are the buildings of the past and future. Now let us study the short phrases, these which demonstrate Eliot's manipulative skill more than anything else:—

"Where is the Life we have lost in living?"

"Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?"

"Of all that was done in the past, you eat the fruit, either rotten or ripe."

"For good and ill deeds belong to a man alone, when he stands alone on the other side of death. . . ."

"And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people; Their only monument the asphalt road And a thousand lost golf balls!'"

"But the man that is will shadow
The man that pretends to be."

"For man is joined spirit and body,
And therefore must serve as spirit and body."

When reading "*The Rock Choruses*" I was so haunted by Leonardo da Vinci's picture, "*The Last Supper*," that I collected my books on his work and sat down to find out exactly why that particular picture lay across every page of printing in this poem of Eliot's.

To follow the pen and the paintbrush became so engrossing that I now endeavour to get it mapped in for others to trace if they wish.

Both artists started their careers with *prairies* rather than *fields* of observation. Eliot experimented with Banking and Leonardo with Armaments. The latter invented the first tank propelled by man-power from inside, under cover. Both artists began their work in art upon fashionable observation and drew their portraits with skilled execution. Both artists in their different arts discovered the same idea of construction when they turned from outward observation to the inward abstract and metaphysical interpretation of life.

Da Vinci used the construction of the triangle with cross patterns, as persistently as Eliot uses the co-related objective to build a trinity. This is the first important observation in the journey of the paintbrush and the pen. Turn to this picture of da Vinci's and you will see the triangle rising from the base of the table at each end upwards, to three windows. The centre largest window is the apex of the triangle. Contemplate the consummate skill of da Vinci in placing the figure of Christ in that central folding light. He has not strained the position by painting Christ standing up in the apex, but has *emphasized the triangle again* by the tranquil sitting

posture, and Christ's two arms resting on the table supported by strong expressive hands. The Christ is completely alone, while surrounded closely by many disciples.

Now let us read the opening of Eliot's poem:—

"The Eagle soars to the summit of Heaven,
The Hunter with his dogs pursues his circuit."

Here, surely, is the same idea of an apex of light. The window which silhouettes the impersonal wisdom of the Rock, which seems Eliot's vision of an impersonal Christ.

Just as da Vinci used the twelve disciples as the two sides of a triangle, so has Eliot balanced his trinity with a group of employed and unemployed workmen.

Perhaps the most arresting feature in the whole tableau of "*The Last Supper*" is the detail with which da Vinci has portrayed each character, more through the speech of hands than the bearded faces.

We recall that the moment of the picture is that one in which Christ made the quiet but astounding pronouncement:—"One of you shall betray me." His right hand, foreshortened, is indicative of finality and courage, while his left hand expresses the futility of any argument with destiny.

Now if we listen to the Chorus Leader in Eliot's poem, we hear:—

"The Stranger
He who has seen what has happened
And who sees what is to happen.
The Witness. The Critic. The Stranger.
The God-shaken, in whom is the truth born."

This is the way Eliot pens his central figure, silhouetted against the light of Zeus, the father and saviour of men, the dispenser of good and evil in the destiny of mankind.

To return to the picture again, the manners and character of the twelve disciples are much the same as any twelve types of manhood we might select at random to-day. That is why they are representative.

Da Vinci is reputed to have said that "If a painter was a dumb poet, then a poet was a blind painter." No doubt the words were hastily spoken, for what blind poet could paint such words as these?:—

"The desert is not remote in southern tropics,
The desert is not only around the corner,
The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,
The desert is in the heart of your brother."

Hasn't the dumb painter illustrated the same thought with his brush:—"One of you shall betray me"?

Yet we continue to keep our brothers out in the desert,
and in doing so, betray our God.

Just as da Vinci drew the disciples with his triangle, so
Eliot draws the workmen and the workless to build his
trinity:—

"I will show you the things that are now being done
And some of the things that were long ago done,
That you may take heart."

Here are the disciples drawn together in the presence of
Christ; and also the workmen bonded together in the life of
wisdom and of building.

The workmen cry:—

"Where the bricks are fallen
We will build with new stone,
Where the beams are rotten
We will build with new timbers. . ."

And the workless answer:—

"There shall be one cigarette to two men,
To two women one half-pint of bitter
Ale."

Together they say:—

"If men do not build,
How shall we live?"

In the second poem we have the clear picture in Eliot's mind
of the twelve disciples:—

"Thus your fathers were made
Fellow citizens of the saints of the household of God
being built upon the foundation
Of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself the chief
Cornerstone."

Further, in the same poem there is a direct reference to
"*The Last Supper*":—"How can we love our neighbour?"

Over the distant years we hear Christ's words speaking in
the silence:—

"A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another;
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (St. John 13,
34.)

How inconceivable it seems that to-day we read of the use of
the Atomic Bomb, in war with each other!

When Eliot writes:—

"Of all that was done in the past, you eat the fruit, either
rotten or ripe,"

we ask ourselves, Are we eating the fruit of our forbears? And if we admit we are, must we not also admit that the seed we sow now is going to bear some terrible fruit for our children? Aren't the thanks offered to the Creator a little illogical? Something like a game of Ninepins, where the Creator has presumably created life so that another created life can destroy it! If this were true, it cannot be called by any other name than a very bitter "*game*." We could assume (given sufficient conceit) that being dissatisfied with his creations in other parts of the globe he decided to give us the name of Cain, that we might destroy our brother, but it is faint praise for so much rejoicing on our part. How incredulous future descendants (if any) will be when they read that our most brilliant achievements were plans for our own elaborate destruction. It is fantastically incredible.

Eliot writes again:—

"There is no life that is not in community,
And no community not lived in praise of God."

Do we praise God by destroying his works?

Here are the warnings given to us over and over again by all the great thinkers, past and present. The stress that they lay upon Charity, Kindness and Friendship. Their repetition almost wears out the words and still we do not understand them. No wonder Eliot is driven to expostulate:—

"O miserable cities of designing men,
O wretched generation of enlightened men,
Betrayed in the mazes of your ingenuities,
Sold by the proceeds of your proper inventions;
..."

Christ went to his death through the greed and falseness of humanity, represented by Judas. That da Vinci painted Judas, *the destroyer*, next to Peter, *the rock* upon which Christ's church should be built, was a minute and devastating piece of psychological insight. Judas was one of his disciples. He was able to justify his betrayal of Christ to Caiaphas and received the money that the murder of Christ brought him as reward. We who are also intimately concerned in betrayal and destruction may reap the reward of the typical Judas. Let us consider the fate of Judas!

It is against the betrayal of humanity by humanity that Eliot so prophetically appeals in this collection of poems. He of all people is not deluded. A close and reasoned study

of history, within which all people are contained, can be read like an alphabet by any thinker with the perception which Eliot has brought to bear upon his studies of mankind.

For critics to present him as a difficult poet has done infinite harm to his prophetic gifts and almost uncanny insight.

Many who would read "*The Rock Choruses*" with the simple, direct message it contains begin by thinking every line holds some hidden intricacy. Yet the call to build our house upon the rock of God is evident from the beginning to the end of these organ poems; the volume of whose music plays the same theme throughout in variation:—

"O weariness of men who turn from God
To the grandeur of your mind and the glory of your action
To arts and inventions and daring enterprises. . . ."

There is nothing difficult in that. The very depth of Eliot's sincerity has taught him absolute clarity.

If a classic can be termed *work that is for all time*, then Eliot has written one in the setting of the twentieth century.

Da Vinci painted one, far back in Henry VIII's reign, and his painting is as true now as it was then. When *Judas* becomes a real disciple of Christ's teaching, then wars will cease and the betrayal of man by man will be impossible.

Eliot's poem asks us if Judas is still the same old Judas to-day, as he was one-thousand nine-hundred and forty-five years ago. If we were honest we might almost say he has converted the other eleven disciples.

What is the future of this world, possessing most dangerous scientific discoveries, without a corresponding knowledge of community living, friendliness and unselfishness?

"You, have you built well, have you forgotten the cornerstone?
Talking of right relations of men, but not of relations of men
to God.
'Our citizenship is in Heaven'; yes, but that is the model and
type for your citizenship upon earth."

The precedent of Pearl Harbour and then the discovery of the Atomic bomb at least brings us 'one ironical thought:—

"Take no heed for the morrow."

But it is equally true that the sons of men have no place to lay their heads, though they may have uranium heating, vegetables underground or cars without petrol.

"And no man knows or cares who is his neighbour
Unless his neighbour makes too much disturbance,
But all dash to and fro in motor-cars,
Familiar with the roads and settled nowhere."

Or perhaps this:—

"And the wind shall say:

'Here were decent godless people:
Their only monument the asphalt road
And a thousand lost golf balls.'

If we could all remember this one line that Eliot wrote, we should not have read his work in vain:—

"We build in vain unless the LORD build with us."

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL

HISTORICAL TRAGEDY

CHARACTER OF HENRY II.

*Taken from Medieval Panorama by G. G. Coulton.
Published Cambridge University Press.*

OUR prelates were among the most prominent lawyers, especially under Henry II and Edward I. (p. 6.)

Henry II, though he again must be heavily discounted, complained that "the archdeacons and rural deans of this realm extort a greater yearly sum than royalty itself receives." (p. 136.)

From William the Conqueror to Henry II the power of the English King was far greater than that of his contemporary in France. (p. 223.)

Referring to the great dignity of Kings, Coulton gives the following contrast:—

At other times in contrast . . . the King might be a mere grown-up schoolboy in his passions . . . Henry II pulling off Becket's costly cloak to give to the beggar; the whole street crowding round to see what the King and Chancellor were fighting about. But far less known is that which Fitzstephen tells us in the same place—how the King would ride on horse-back into the Chancellor's hall, bow in hand, on the way to or from hunting; how he would dismount and leap over the table and sit by Becket's side and drink with him; "They played together like two boys of the same age." (From p. 228.)

Further in the same book we read of Henry II summoning the pious and bold St. Hugh of Lincoln to attend his court at Woodstock because the Bishop had excommunicated the King's chief forester. He was received with studied impoliteness. At Henry's bidding, presumably, no courtier rose as the ecclesiastic joined the group under the trees. Dead silence reigned even though Hugh moved one of the councillors to make room for himself to sit by the King. The King purposely ignoring the Bishop asked for a needle and thread and began to sew the bandage on his finger. The Bishop dared the remark:—'How like you are now to your ancestors of Falaise!' (William the Conqueror's mother was daughter to a tanner of Falaise, and in those days leather-dressers were commonly leather-sellers and workers, so that "cobbler" may well have become a proverbial nickname). The King, 'struck to the heart by this smooth yet razor-like stroke, clenched his fingers and burst into uncontrollable laughter, rolling over on the ground with his head in the grass and his face in the air; in which posture he long gave way to his laughter without control.' (From p. 229.)

Another observer says:—When he went into his chapel he would spend the time whispering and scribbling pictures. (p. 231.)

Henry II's court was a specially literary one. . . . The scholars' verdict from the point of view of comfort and personal respect is unanimously unfavourable. . . . The discomforts were doubtless aggravated by Henry's physical strength and restless energy. (From p. 232.)

The great period of written French poetry dates roughly from the marriage of Eleanor of Guienne to Henry II. The patronage of this Queen and her sons brought together the two main elements, the troubador from the south and trouvère from the north of France. This great movement lasted for one hundred and twenty years. During all that time Aristocratic England was practically a colony of France. (p. 574.)

In chivalry we have that same contrast of splendour and squalor: dresses of brocade and cloth of gold, of which the sleeves might dip into a sauce on the table, or a train drag in the filth of the streets or of the floor; and beneath the table the dogs fighting for bones and leaving whatever they had not consumed.

In chivalry the stress lay always on the generosity of the moment rather than on the plodding business-like justice. (p. 236.)

The characteristic of royal justice in England was that it held local custom as of little account, and that, through its system of assizes and writs, it established a procedure and jurisprudence of general application which was, on the whole, favourable to a free middle class and hostile to the seignorial spirit. We might well add "hostile to the clerical spirit," for Henry II sought to limit ecclesiastical jurisdiction and to make certain that criminous clerks were punished.

He also used the jury for obtaining information and using it as a smoothly-working judicial institution. (p. 366.)

From Andre Maurois' "A History of England." Published by Jonathan Cape.

Henry Plantagenet, who thus became Henry II of England, came of a powerful family with a dark history. His Angevin ancestors included Fulke the Black. . . . Henry himself was a hard man, of 'volcanic force,' but cultivated and charming in manner. A stocky, bull-necked youth, with close-cropped red hair, he had taken the fancy of Queen Eleanor of France when he came to do homage to King Louis VII for Maine and Anjou. . . . She obtained a divorce, and two months later, at the age of twenty-seven, married this lad of nineteen, to whom she brought as dowry the great Duchy of Aquitaine, which included Limousin, Gascony and Perigord with suzerain rights over Auvergne and Toulouse.

THE CHARACTER OF BECKET (1118-1170).

Thomas Becket was born in London of French parents. His mother a native of Caen, and his father from a family of small Norman landowners. His education was carried through, first in London and Surrey, then in Paris. Lastly he went with Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Rome and Rheims. Between the years 1143-48 he visited Bologna and Auxere, where he studied canonical law.

He had already distinguished himself as an arbitrator and good administrator; on the Primate's recommendation he went to the court of Henry II, where he became a great friend of the King's and was soon made Chancellor. As Chancellor working for and with the King he was very successful. Both men had a natural flair for sound and wise judgments in the building of State and Church laws.

Becket, as well as his gifts of administration, could claim to be an excellent soldier. He commanded a company of Knights and conducted a battle for the King after the King had withdrawn his presence from the camp. He had also unhorsed a French Knight of very great repute. Becket was good at games and in the hunting field. Was extravagant in his dress and household, and in every way the cultured and good companion of the King. He was fifteen years Henry's senior, yet we read they were as boys together. The King advanced this promising young man to that of second to himself. While in office under the King he had brought about certain legislation restricting the Church's authority, but had skilfully retained Theobald's friendship. Theobald nominated Becket as his successor to Canterbury because he believed that Becket would keep the King outside Church legislation. Henry also appointed him Archbishop because he believed that Becket would at last bring the Church under the domination of the Crown. He elected Becket to Canterbury in spite of the repeated warnings Becket gave him.

There was much common sense on the King's side, for the justiciary laws of the Church and State were conducted separately. Cases of murder were unsatisfactory. Nearly all educated people could claim some official connection with the Church, so that they could be tried in the Church courts. The greatest judgment the Church could pass as punishment was excommunication. Henry wished criminals to be handed on to the civil courts after the Church's judgment had been effected. A further source of trouble was the law of Sanctuary. This led to unscrupulous bands of robbers taking sanctuary in the churches by day and plundering and murdering at night. Of the two men, Theobald on the one side and the King on the other, it was Theobald who gauged Becket's character correctly. From the moment Becket became Archbishop he put the Church before the King; so, whether deliberately or not, Becket became the equal of the King so far as England was concerned. This led to two insurmountable difficulties. The King felt that his kindness in raising Becket to power had been unjustifiably exploited. Becket's growing pride felt his ability was worthy of the position he claimed.

* William of Newburgh appears to express the verdict of the most impartial contemporaries when he says that the Bishop was:—*zelo justitiae fervidus, utrum autem plene secundum scientiam novit Deus*: "burning with zeal for justice, but whether altogether according to wisdom God knows."

The final issue between these two great friends was The Constitution of Clarendon in which Henry II endeavoured to settle relations between the Church and State (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, p. 761). The Constitution contained a body of English laws issued at Clarendon, 1164, by which Henry II tried to settle the issues at stake between the Church and State. Becket, while signing the declaration did not seal it, and it was never fully accepted. After Becket's murder Henry II failed to maintain it fully.

THE PEOPLE IN THE REIGN OF HENRY II.

From general reading we gather that these times were stormy and turbulent. In the preceding reign of Stephen the Barons had become so powerful that they were able to tax, plunder and enslave the people. To expiate these outrages they built monasteries, abbeys and churches all over England. But some of these institutions were as unscrupulous as the Barons, and both extorted and enslaved the people. As a result they became timid, despondent and superstitious—more like chickens to be plucked than good stout yeomen. Henry II's legislation was a God-send of justice and they naturally turned to this strong ruler who seemed able to protect them through his judges and their courts.

But, a people who believed that every wood was filled with devils, which only the Church could exorcise; a people who believed the fantastic tale of the sailor's knife; a people who were influenced by magic, taboo and miracles, all of which were heedless and illogically inconsequent, were a prey between the power of the Church and that of the King. Ignorance and poverty are the strong roots of suspicion, forming a slow-moving inert background. The condition of a nation's people moves this background like a sullen sea. We have seen it at work in revolutions, strikes, civil wars, and war with nations. Its insidious danger is rarely recognised before the mass-movement has surged forward to claim its blind sense of justice. This, then, was the stage upon which Henry II and Becket played their life's tragedy.

N.B.—The quotation from "*The Encyclopædia Britannica*" of William of Newburgh has a family interest, as my father's forbears are said to have descended from Henri de Newburgh of Rede (Reading) in 1274.

THE PLAY

The nature of all tragedy requires the downfall of a great personality through some unconquerable weakness.

We have taken a brief survey of the two chief characters in this play; that of Henry II and his great friend, Thomas Becket, as also the atmosphere and circumstances belonging to the ordinary people who lived at the time of this drama.

In this play of Eliot's the present scientific and mechanical mind is not disturbed by the narrowed phenomena of ghosts and witches. Nevertheless, tragedy must be propelled to its destiny by some incentive which counts so powerfully that it becomes the agent of inevitable death. In place of supernatural phenomena Eliot has used the power of thought.

In mechanical terms it is an eight-horse-power tragedy compiled from four Tempters and four Knights, with the cause and direction of the motive power in Henry II.

Although Henry does not appear in person, his magnificent, vibrant character, lustily and brilliantly alive, permeates and relentlessly drives Court and Country to his will. It is Henry whose physical strength restlessly drives across France and over the small island conquered by his grandfather. It is the same overwhelming physical strength that overpowers Becket; causes his wife Queen Elcanor to intrigue against him; and his sons to become traitors to their father. The fire of a brilliant mind unable to find the key to the riddle of life propels and burns its forceful way through the whole of his reign.

"Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker,
Things had perhaps been different for Thomas."

Here at the beginning of the play Eliot provides us with the fundamental reason for the ultimate tragedy. At the end of Part I in Thomas Becket's soliloquy the same thought draws its reflected conclusions:—

"I know that history at all times draws
The strangest consequences from remotest cause.
But for every evil, every sacrilege,
Crime, wrong, oppression, and the axe's edge,
Indifference, exploitation, you, and you,
And you, must all be punished."

If two people love or venerate each other, or if two people hate or despise each other, they set up a current of communicated thought, travelling emotionally between two human

points. The close earlier friendship of Henry and Becket established this emotional current, with its absorption and dangerous obsession of one mind by the other. The mediums which are the four Tempters and four Knights are so adroit that it is quite possible to overlook their significance, since their intrinsic value in both cases takes the colour of their background. Let us be clear about this. The proud, æsthetic, brilliant and stubborn Becket is assailed by four temptations which are of equal artistic calibre to himself. The suggestion might be raised that they were his own thoughts and must therefore be of the same architecture. But are they? On analysis, only the fourth Tempter, that of *Martyrdom*, is really Becket's own responsibility. The other three are Henry's apples. It was Henry who gave Becket the tempting apple of fine clothes, hunting, wine and pleasure; Henry who gave him the redder apple of the Chancellorship, and Henry who insisted on Becket eating of the ripest of all prize apples in nominating him Archbishop.

Perhaps it could equally be said:—

"Had Thomas Becket been greater, or had he been weaker,
Things had perhaps been different for the King."

Why did not Becket realize, with his greater mental ability, that impulsive generosity is extremely vulnerable to suspicion and regret? To be truly generous requires the character of a Christ. Most generous people are hampered by the selfish personal desire for gratitude, and where this form of grovelling is not forthcoming it immediately brings regret and resentment in its wake. What we call our possessions in this life are no more than the inheritance of the richness of the earth. We are custodians of it only so long as we have life. If we distribute what we have, without even a thought of thanks, we are the true stewards of the Creator; but if we fail, then we are likened to the steward who buried his one talent.

Henry, in return for his extravagant gifts, required the absolute subservience of Becket. It was an unsound, rather base motive.

Becket with his higher spiritual motives failed to realize that the King could not appreciate the falsity that requires abasement. When we think about it, can any one of us really appreciate the nature and nobleness of Christ's giving, or his love of all mankind? It is easy to give when we know we shall receive thanks. It is a pleasure to love our friends and even stretch our pleasure to the inclusion of nice acquaintances;

but can we ever love the lower types which come within our orbit? I have read medical reports of Belsen and Buchenwald, etc., and I have wondered how long our vaunted pride of birth, culture and social prestige could retain any semblance of decency when just that alteration of having no money and having to fight for food conditioned our lives. What we possess, then, is by the grace of God, and arrogance and condescension are things that are singularly lacking in taste. The lowest type has earned its right to try to live and understand this life. The circumstances of these lives are matters of shame to us, not motives for superiority. Our gifts require no gratitude save from ourselves, who have been privileged to possess that we might give to others. Our life standard includes the lowest life that has the right to tread this earth, recalling that the strength of a chain is its weakest link.

These, then, are vital thought forces at work. They are Henry's desire for subservient gratitude and Becket's pride of advancement.

When we come to the four Knights who were the final instruments of destruction in this drama, we have the prototypes of Henry himself. The ideals of Knighthood belong far more to legend than reality. In Malory's "*Morte D'Arthur*," the need seems to be chiefly that of working off a superabundance of physical energy. In order to "brast" somebody to the bone they would dispute a right-of-way through the forest, or circle a stretch of ground and fight any equal who came near. While the stories are romantically attractive, having grown from the Feudal and Moral allegory, history shows that Knights were prone to plunder and rape. So these four agents like chameleons took Henry's background. Hasty, physically exacting and irreverent.

To such men the violation of sanctuary meant little more than whispering and scribbling in church meant to Henry.

The destructive effect of physical boisterousness in domination over spiritual reflection cannot be too greatly stressed as a contrasting factor in this play. It is just one more example of Eliot's growing use of the contraplex which in the poems that follow are so fully and skilfully mastered.

The time which the play covers is from December 2nd to December 29th, 1170.

It opens with women who describe the living conditions of the common people of those days. The place which superstition and prophetic dread holds amongst them is clearly emphasized. In all ages throughout all time the quarrels of

leaders inflict their consequences upon the masses. They become apprehensive, intimidated, restless and bewildered, and such is the atmosphere of the women whom rumour has gathered to the cathedral precincts.

"For us the poor, there is no action,
But only to wait and to witness.

With the chorus is the voice of Eliot, speaking far back in 1170 and also to-day in 1945:—

"Destiny waits in the hand of God, not in the hands of statesmen
Who do, some well, some ill, planning and guessing,
Having their aims which turn in their hands in the pattern
of time."

Isn't it true that a poet's greatness lies in his capacity to pick up the threads of eternal thought, not only the moth-eaten threads of a single life-skein? Can we not hear again in these words John Inglesant, who at long last came to realize an unrecognized justice at work in the affairs of men?

The play goes on.

With the entry of the three priests and messenger, light is thrown on the characters of Henry and Becket, through the medium of cultivated minds. They seem doubtful of the present goodwill or of lasting friendship between the two great men.

"What reconciliation of two proud men?"

"What peace can be found
To grow between the hammer and the anvil?"

(This passage is similarly treated in Tennyson's *Becket*, Act I,

Scene 3—*Hilary*:—

"For hath not thine ambition set the Church
This day between the hammer and the anvil.")

"... is the wall of pride cast down
That divided them? Is it peace or war?"

"He comes in pride and sorrow, affirming all his claims, . . ."

"I know that the pride bred of sudden prosperity
Was but confirmed by bitter adversity."

"Had the King been greater, or had he been weaker,
Things had perhaps been different for Thomas."

The stage and the audience through the tools of the Chorus and Priests are both ready to receive the chief character—*THOMAS BECKET*, once Chancellor of England and now Archbishop of Canterbury.

What is so immediately striking in Eliot's development of this prelate is his likeness to Shakespeare's Coriolanus. Both are essentially proud men and both strangely modest and considerate to others. Coriolanus despised the masses. Becket despised the nobility. Both strove with their weakness and both gave their lives recognizing the truth of their failure. Both were fearless, both were truthful.

Eliot's proud Coriolanus despised the nobility from his intellectual height. The sensitiveness of such a highly-strung, proud mentality such as Becket's, in relation to the vulgarity of class distinctions, must have been as profound as it is to-day. The paramount brain is unable to subject itself to domination, no matter what the presumptions of birth might claim.

Great minds are very conscious of loneliness, for they have no place in ordinary life. Common people are unable to understand them except in a limited sense and the ruling classes cannot persuade them to their narrowed interests. Aliens in an alien world, they themselves presage their destiny.

"All things prepare the event. Watch."

Thus while Becket waits the preparation of his rooms, we surely go back to "*Ash Wednesday*," a poem which Eliot wrote five years earlier:—

"These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer
For what is done, not to be done again
May the judgment not be too heavy. . . ."

It is in this period of waiting that the powers of thought begin to assail Becket.

His first Tempter is in the guise of memory. Recalling the pleasures of his friendship with Henry and the worldly luxuries he enjoyed and which he might still enjoy if he wished. But these he dismisses:—

The fool fixed in his folly may think
He can turn the wheel on which he turns."

The second Tempter is the Chancellorship. Henry has deliberately left this office open for his acceptance. Tempting him:—

"To set down the great, protect the poor. . ."

Becket answers these promptings within himself:—

"I was the King, his arm, his better reason
But what was once exaltation
Would now be only mean descent."

In this passage we have a comparison involuntarily given by Becket of his valuation of the King's brain.

The third attack comes with the thought of an alliance with the Barons. But Becket's loyalty to his King repudiates this channel of attack. Coriolanus attempted an alliance with his enemies, but the subterfuge did not succeed.

"If the Archbishop cannot trust the Throne
He has good cause to trust none but God alone."

The fourth, last and most difficult Tempter is in reality Becket's own creation. It is the insidious suggestion of Martyrdom and the sanctified glory that such an one would receive from the people. It follows the track of Becket's own ambitions.

In this argument within himself, Becket faces the truth of his pride and the fact that it is possible: to do the right thing from the wrong motive of pride and glory.

"Is there no way, in my soul's sickness,
Does not lead to damnation in pride?"

Note:—Thomas—"To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

A similar phrase occurs in "The Last Puritan" by Santayana, published in the same year, 1935—p. 451.

Jm Darnley;—"That sometimes we do the right thing for the wrong reason."

Before the four Tempters leave him, they sum up his character:—

"This man is obstinate, blind, intent
On self-destruction,
Passing from deception to deception,
From grandeur to grandeur to final illusion,
Lost in the wonder of his own greatness,
The enemy of society, enemy of himself."

This first scene closes with Becket's soliloquy, in which his mind clarifies itself. It is a summary of the four Temptations.

1. "Thirty years ago, I searched all the ways
That lead to pleasure, advancement and praise."

2. "Ambition comes behind and unobservable."

3. "I beat the Barons at their own game. . . .

.
The raw nobility, whose manners matched their finger-nails,"

4. "To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

"I know
What yet remains to show you of my history
Will seem to most of you at best futility,
Senseless self-slaughter of a lunatic,
Arrogant passion of a fanatic.
I know that history at all times draws
The strangest consequence from remotest cause."

Each temptation is thus reviewed and found no longer a temptation, though this gifted mind does not flinch from penalties which always follow every act, word and deed. He faces his life in the future upon what his past has made it. It was the logical clarity of his thinking which enabled him to steer his proud unswerving course.

Just as Coriolanus strove, but finally recognized his own failure in his lack of toleration towards the common people, so Becket strove with his pride, only to recognize that it was unalterable and that he must face the final issues; with all that was left to him—that gift which acknowledges truth.

"Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain;
Temptation shall not come in this kind again."

How different was to be the tragic end of his friend Henry. A man who never stopped to face the facts of his own actions; whose selfishness returned like a boomerang; whose kingdom, gained by intrigue and greed, fell about his own head, by the intrigue and treachery of his sons. A man who ruthlessly broke the hearts of others, himself died of a broken heart, defeated on the battlefield and alone.

The first Act of the play ends with Thomas.

The interlude is a sermon preached by Becket on Christmas Day in the Cathedral, and is again of a prophetic nature.

A quotation from Maeterlinck's "*Wisdom and Destiny*" seems to sum up Becket's attitude:—

"Let us always remember that nothing befalls us that is not of the nature of ourselves. There comes no adventure but wears to our soul the shape of our everyday thoughts; and deeds of heroism are but offered to those who for long years have been heroes in obscurity and silence."

The final Act is: Scene I in the Archbishop's Hall, and Scene II in the Cathedral.

Scene I opens with a chorus of women and attendants. Descriptive and prophetic, in which one line strikes our ears as most applicable to ourselves:—

"The peace of this world is always uncertain, unless men
Keep the peace of God."

The priests enter, carrying the banners of St. Stephen, St. John and the Holy Innocents. Psalms are heard for the saints. The priests talk as they wait to go into the Cathedral for Mass:—

"One moment
Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection,
We say, that was the day. The critical moment
That is always now, and here."

Such lines as these we find again in Eliot's "*Four Quartets*" in the general atmosphere of the poems.

Into this cultured dignity four Knights are suddenly hurled. A contrast of the material world to the spiritual. They are received with natural courtesy by the priests, but their own behaviour is no more than a thin pretence of chivalry.

Becket at their request dismisses his priests and, the Knights finding themselves four armed men to one unarmed, grow bolder and more insolent. At this point the Knights are not drunk, so their excuses given later to the people do not hold water and only add to their general boorishness and blundering mental poverty. We are fully aware, as Becket was, that these same Knights, but for Becket's loyalty to the King, could have been bought by Becket for his own purposes. He sums up their value in this phrase:—

"Then let your new coat of loyalty be worn
Carefully, so it get not soiled or torn."

In spite of Becket's obstinacy, the reader must experience a growing liking for this priest. He is quite fearless, but at the same time extends a dignified courtesy to these brawling marauders of quite exceptional restraint and breeding. After the departure of the Knights (who apparently perceiving their rather boisterous futility went off to drink, presumably to gain some type of dutch courage) the chorus again takes the stage. By prophetic utterance they help to draw the death-canopy further over the impending scene. The symbols of realism are incorporated, such as "The horn of the beetle; Sweet soap in the woodpath; The horror of the ape." All bred

from the 1920 experiments. Thomas Becket enters, driven nearer to death. Driven largely, too, by his own knowledge that it was inevitable. Calmly he reassures the people and ends with a phrase we shall hear again in a later poem ("Burnt Norton").

"Human kind cannot bear very much reality."

(Compare with:—"Go, go, go, said the bird; human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.")

The priests urge Becket to take sanctuary, but finding him obstinate, press him to take the evening service:—"My Lord, to vespers!"

Failing in this persuasion they resort to force and drag him into the Cathedral.

The chorus again carries the movement of the play forward, and another reflection from "*Ash Wednesday*" takes its place in their speech:—

"Who shall then plead for me,
Who intercede for me, in my most need?"

The priests bar the doors, feeling at last that they have found safety; though it savoured rather of the puritan's ethics who said:—Trust in God, but keep your powder dry!

Somewhere I have read that Becket opened the doors himself because some of his priests and attendants were caught on the further side in danger. But Eliot does not take this explanation. He puts Becket's stand on a still higher ethical plane than even unselfishness. Becket will not have the sacredness of sanctuary trampled to the level of a fortress. He will not have God's law lowered to the level of man's. So he retains the supremacy of God's law above Kings and above men. True to the last, in his exception to the King's wishes.

In vain the priests protest:—

"My Lord! These are not men, these come not as men
Come, but
Like maddened beasts."

Becket answers their pleading:—

"I give my life
To the Law of God above the Law of Man.
Unbar the door! Unbar the door!"

The now drunken Knights enter, and here we recall that ignorance has always been given its right of expression in this world. The lowest life which qualifies to come to this earth must be given its opportunity of manifestation. But consider

the balance of judgment which insulates the extent of operation. Ignorance only changes material substance, it cannot affect spiritual knowledge. The stupidity of war changes the chemical combinations of the body into other products, but the spiritual or mind standard remains at that level of retrogression which permits war to take place. People freely quote to-day:—"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." What does this mean? Simply a cancellation of numerical values and spiritually a stalemate, or recurring decimal. What can we deduce from the murder of Becket's body? This, that Becket defeated the King because he challenged the King on a spiritual plane, and not as the King challenged Becket, on a material manifestation. The King's lack of control could destroy Becket's body, but Becket's spirit burned the King's physical standards to the ground. His spiritual fire gutted the King and his kingdom.

Nevertheless, the King had achieved much material good for his people, and his life lived on this earth justified its existence. From the date of his reign we can count our privileges of *primitive justice*, if no more.

"Thy glory is declared even in
that which denies thee; the darkness declares the
glory of light."

"THE FOUR QUARTETS"

(BURNT NORTON)

WHEN we meet T. S. Eliot to-day, it is at the junction of his later pure poetry. All Mr. Eliot's past work is present; his magnet is visibly seen at work, drawing each steel filing to its centralized thought.

The co-ordinate use made of garlic and sapphires (one a common vegetable, the other a precious gem), both obtained from the origin of the earth, that holds the iron ore, which later becomes the axle-tree of a cart, or perhaps the carden-shaft of a motor-car, is not accidental. It is a careful collection of images, in themselves motionless, but which Eliot sets moving like a clock whose hands rotate with the day and night.

Contraplex is in use—the embedded iron, the pebbled sapphire, the stored garlic are all capable of immense activity if they are transposed into different spheres of circumstance. This transposition of thought, this fusion of substance with abstract conception, and inversely the use of abstract conception manœuvred into substance, causes the reader a temporary sense of crushing contradictions. Actually the shuttle carries the thought-thread industriously backwards and forwards, and by the thickness of thread above thread Eliot collects the whole texture which is ultimately his poem. Then it is that we find there has been no real contradiction at all, but a movement of equal strength in opposite directions, like positive and negative electricity. It is this perfect balance of oppositional strength, towards and away from actuality, that creates the rhythmic rise and fall of his objective work. The quietness, the restfulness of "*Burnt Norton*" is encompassed by the articulate restraint with which the vast subjects of 'timelessness' and 'interchanging fantasy' with reality are organized and guided into the pen of human conception.

As a tree is chained in sphere by its roots; as a fish is restricted by water; so is the human being limited in action by a few degrees of heat or cold. Eliot follows this scientific channel closely. He does not hitch his wagon to a star that drops him panting in the aftermath of despair, nor does he go down to the gloom of Hades. He keeps steadfastly to the breathing plane allotted to human life; he appreciates the narrow scope within which we have our being, and by doing this he achieves a scope of thinking far beyond inflated courage.

What has Eliot achieved?

The delicate poise of thought flowing in two directions, but in equal strength; the balance between those things which we imagine possess the texture of reality and those things that occur and have the texture of memory.

Is there any difference between the two?

Don't they both belong to the realm of conjure—one, in possibility, the other as a shadow of the past, both real to us because no longer reality?

It is impossible to know what 'now' is; we are either conjecturing it or remembering it. Therefore the actual moment of 'now' must be the pivoting point of conscious living.

When Eliot widened the conception of the Imagistic movement into the dialectic dialogue he had taken an important

step; but later his technique was so skilled that he maintained the essence of dialogue in MONISTIC form.

In all Eliot's later work his thought is kept in flux, neither by a Doctor Watson nor an oration. His mind has ejected a yeast ball of fermenting thought in continuous spontaneity.

His subtle intergradations; his sensitiveness to form; his reasoned search for an interpretative motive behind the necessity of living, shows a poet both aware of his background and of what goal he wishes to reach.

The actual words used are no more poetic than the single notes of a common chord are music. But if we take the whole chord or the complete musical phrase we have a perfect analogy of what Eliot strove to find and has achieved through his panoramic conception of poetry.

Let us try out his music, listen to the cadence and its answering falling sequence; the refinement of touch; the restful beauty that is obtained through restrained directional thinking. There is no plunging, bracing or sword rattling; no baroque intensity or bizarre coquetry with a pretence of life, God or fashion. He reiterates the 'C major of this life,' the dominant note of the majority who live this earth-life, and he strives to probe what this major activity fulfils.

First comes the concrete phrase passing into abstraction:—

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in the past."

There is no contradiction. The results of present experience become memories, and upon the basis of this collective past the future with its past experience is founded.

Now follows the completion of the opening phrase, the contraplex, which takes the abstract into the concrete:—

"Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden."

Then the final duality, the counterpoint thought in one musical phrase:—

§ "There they were, dignified, invisible."

Everyone's imagination contains dignified, concrete images of loved people or things, who are out of reach, which are

beyond contact; invisible and yet so full of reality to our inward knowledge:—

"Go, go, go, said the bird; human kind
Cannot bear very much reality."

There is no place for scoffing here. We who know what the passing of life means, in the love for those who are no longer with us, have experienced the overwhelming crush of their real yet invisible presence. Human kind finds it difficult to bear very much reality. Again, if we were asked to explain the present, could we illustrate it with greater skill than this?:—

"At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity."

Now come back to the narrow strata of our capacity of living:—

"Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness.
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the harbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered." (Burnt Norton.)

Life is aware of its consciousness of having lived, only through its recollection of the events which occurred. These events are influenced by all that preceded them. It is no use to bare our breasts to the stars, to dare them to fail to draw our wagon. We have to find out what we and the past 'we' did, which fumbled with a future and gave it its oncoming shape. Our past is not forgotten, it goes along with us. "The sins of the fathers shall be visited unto the third and fourth generation." Is there a braver answer than this to those who would seek an escape from their deeds?

Eliot has not swept a rainbow paintbrush across an exotic heaven; he has used the ingredient of concentrated thought; the iron key with which each one is supplied to solve the meaning of life and, by our reasoning, find the door and the key-hole which will let us through to a possible Garden of Eden—to something that lies in a better category than this present destructive retribution. And so this 'Time' conception leads us to the opening phrase of "*East Coker*," the second poem in this collocation.

References to "Burnt Norton":—

Erhebung—Exultation.

"The detail of the pattern is movement as in the figure of the ten stairs." "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*" by St. John of the Cross (Name: John de Yepes). Born of poor parents on 24th June, 1542, at Hontiveros in Old Castille. Developed Mysticism in the Carmelite Order. From "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*"—Chapter XI. "For it is well known that on the spiritual road not to go on overcoming self is to go backwards, and not to increase our gain is to lose."

Ref.: St. John of the Cross was, by Almighty God, given to St. Teresa to labour with her in effecting the Reform of the Order of Mount Carmel. He, like her, was favoured with marvellous insight into the Mysteries of the higher spiritual life, and has left invaluable treatises on Mystical Theology. He closed, by a holy death, a life of utmost austerity, December 14th, A.D. 1591. (*The Roman Missal*.)

Explanation of the figure of the ten stairs, Conception of St. John of the Cross:—

But just as, when two things are united, the one which has the most power, virtue and activity communicates its properties to the other, just so, since God has greater strength, virtue and activity than the soul, He can communicate His properties to it and makes it, as it were, deific, and leaves it, as it were, divinized, to a greater or lesser degree, corresponding to the greater or the lesser degree of union between the two. This is the basic conception in Christian mysticism.

"*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*" from the Allison Peers translation of the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa, C.B. Book II, page 66:—

"The means of ascending to Union with God is faith.

The soul of faith passes into the interior darkness.

The soul here calls this a 'ladder' and 'secret,' because all the rungs and parts of it are secret and hidden from all sense and understanding. And thus the soul has remained in darkness as to all light of sense and understanding, going forth beyond all limits of nature and reason in order to ascend by this Divine ladder of faith, which attains and penetrates even to the heights of God."

Book II, Chapter XII, pages 111-12:—

"The stairs of a staircase have nought to do with the top of it and the room to which it leads, yet are means to the reaching of both; and if the climber left not behind the stairs below him until there were no more to climb, but desired to remain upon any one of them, he would never reach the top of them nor would he mount to the pleasant and peaceful room which is the goal. And just so the soul that is to attain in this life to the union of that supreme repose and blessing, by means of all these stairs of meditations, forms and ideas, must pass through

them and have done with them, since they have no resemblance and bear no proportion to the goal to which they lead, which is GOD."

The theme is developed in greater detail in the further work following called "*The Dark Night of the Soul*," Chapter XVIII:—

"But, speaking now somewhat more substantially and properly of this ladder of secret contemplation, we shall observe that the principal characteristic of contemplation, on account of which it is here called a ladder, is that it is the science of love—for it is love alone that unites."

References after discussion with Mr. Eliot, November 24th, 1943:—

"The figure of the ten stairs" refers to the 'Bride' which is used symbolically of the Soul in its upward movement towards God. The 'ladder' or 'steps' to which St. John of the Cross refers and which Mr. Eliot uses in poetry, with greater euphony as "stairs," signifies Divine Love and Faith.

Page 463, Chapter XIX, "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*," Vol. I, 2nd Book, under "*Dark Night of the Soul*":—"We observe, then, that the steps of this ladder of love by which the Soul mounts, one by one to God, are ten."

Mr. Eliot's frequent use of the word "quick" as in—'quick now here, now, always,' in "*Burnt Norton*," and the same line again in "*Little Gidding*," Stanza 5, should be compared with the Minor poem, "*Cape Ann*," in Mr. Eliot's 1909-35 poems. It means the quick movement of birds to be instantly on the spot and as quickly gone.

Reference:—The title quotation from Herakleitos.

Mr. Eliot writes:—

"Hermann Diels' 'Fragmente der Vorsokratiker' is, I believe, still considered the standard text of the pre-Socratic philosophers; at any rate it was when I was a student of these matters. His text is accompanied by a German translation and I give here—under his translation of the passage in question:—

'Aber obschon das Wort allein gemein ist,
leben die meisten doch so, as ob sie eine eigene
Einsicht haetten.'

I should say that Herakleitos meant a great deal more than simply 'the word is in common use.' I think he meant rather that the reason, the Logos, or the rational understanding of the nature of things is common or available to all men. '*Most people live as if they had a peculiar and individual insight.*' No one translation, however, can be considered as anything more than a limited interpretation since the meanings of key words in Greek philosophy can never be completely rendered in a modern language. That is the reason for my putting the Greek text instead of an English translation of it."

THE FAMILY REUNION

THE position of Eliot's second play, coming as it does between "*Burnt Norton*" and "*East Coker*," indicates that *The Figure of the Ten Stairs*, as conceived by St. John of the Cross, plays a more important part than Dante's theory of *The Inferno, Purgatory and Paradise*. Though throughout this play it must be borne in mind that Eliot is always under the influence of Dante, as evidenced in "*Ash Wednesday*."

The difference between Dante's thesis and that of St. John of the Cross is spherical distance.

Dante uses three rigid planes of living; that of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. The characters are reviewed in these static divisions and the only sense of movement, or promise of possible progression, is conveyed by Virgil and Dante in the rôle of observers. Thus the labour of *Inferno*, the labour of Purgatory and the labour of *Paradise* gives a temporary black-out to movement.

St. John of the Cross, as already shown in references to "*Burnt Norton*," has a more elastic structure. Instead of three defined spheres of existence he uses a graduated figure in the form of a ladder or stairs. This symbolic division between the sense of good and the sense of evil makes both perceptible in linear measure of height or depth.

Eliot has gone further than either Dante or St. John and has based his theory on a fluid measure of consciousness. But, consciousness applied with a wider conception than simply *awareness of living*, capped by the possibility of a threatening hell or rewarding heaven, after death.

Eliot suggests a *belt of living*, rather like the sweep of the wind which blows the clouds and the waves of the sea with the same breath at the same moment. He incorporates the possibility of living different lives on interlocked planes of existence at one and the same time.

Like the colour spectrum, one state of consciousness imperceptibly infiltrates the other, as colour penetrates colour until it emerges to a position on the spectrum where, according to the Young-Helmholtz theory we define, red, green, violet. The incorporated condition being that of white, which contains all

colour waves. So we find the *white light* of the play contained in these words:—

Harry:—

"It's only when they see nothing
That people can always show the suitable emotions
And so far as they feel at all, their emotions are suitable.
They don't understand what it is to be awake,
To be living on several planes at once
Though one cannot speak with several voices at once."

The play's scenario is severe. It is the full suffocating, impenetrable phalanx of 'the family' which is really the padded room that humanity has evolved. The room in which the skeletons are concealed from the world by the combined family battlement. Such misfits are the horror of punctilious, prosperous, respectable family edifices.

It is against this block of masonry, known psychologically as 'family pride,' that the two principal characters are thrown.

Harry and Agatha (nephew and aunt) are two people capable of travelling beyond the family merit; who can achieve a wider scope of existence than the related family conclave.

Agatha:—

"When the loop in time comes—and it does not come for everybody—

The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves."

And further in the play:—

Harry:—

"All that I could hope to make you understand
Is only events: not what has happened.
And people to whom nothing has ever happened
Cannot understand the unimportance of events."

Harry is no more young than Prufrock was ever old. Agatha his aunt is in reality a contemporary.

Perhaps it is arbitrary to claim, without direct evidence, that Agatha is the 'weeping girl' grown old and that the Irish child is the origin of both. To place these three—the child, the girl and the aunt—as one creation suggests itself on only one count. They are the only lovable women Eliot has ever drawn.

Harry and Agatha, the two brilliant skeletons in the family padded room, are breaking their way out. Striving for freedom in the same way that the young chestnut leaf bursts its padded shield and gluey sheath to reach the light.

The battle-ground is 'family custom' and the sword is the thin blade of deeper consciousness. Ability to think, to reason,

to live some hidden meaning that lies further than the realm of daily events.

It is a dangerous enterprise, for within the family fold, however obtuse, there is protection. The moment we step beyond its walls we are strangers faced by all that life imports. It is here that the greatest fight begins—the fight for sanity on the trail which must be blazed alone.

Hamlet lost this battle and went down dragging his circle with him. Coriolanus, Arthur, Cleopatra won it in death faced alone.

Eliot has shaped the idea of 'family' for us:—

"In an old house there is always listening, and more is heard than spoken.

And what is spoken remains in the room waiting for the future to hear it.

And whatever happens began in the past and presses hard on the future."

A psychological reference to the family façade is given in Harry's return after eight years of absence:—

Harry:—

"How can you sit in this blaze of light, for all the world to look at?"

This is Eliot's portrait of the family in the album. That which may be presented for all the world to see.

The first scene is entirely absorbed by the family, repairing ramparts, organizing forces and preparing for the sensed cataclysm that threatens their stability.

The second scene is Harry's realization of:—"The shadow of something behind our meagre childhood."

Part II, Scene I, shows the family calling up an ally in the form of the family doctor. It has already foreseen the need of a heavy gun.

Part II, Scene II, is the most important act in the whole play. It is the fulfilment of Agatha's past renunciation, as it marches fearlessly towards further suffering. Through Agatha, Harry regains his sanity and adjustment. At the end of this scene we see him 'set square' for the march into the unknown.

Part II, Scene I, has already prepared us:—

Agatha:—

"To rest in our own suffering

Is evasion of suffering. We must learn to suffer more."

The refinement with which Eliot handles Agatha's character brings out its suffering, pathos and nobility. Such delicate pen-strokes as these, faintly sketch the young woman behind the old, with a beauty only possible to a great artist:—

"I came
Once for a long vacation. I remember
A summer day of unusual heat
For this cold country."

Harry:—"And then?"

Agatha:—

"There are hours when there seems to be no past or future,
Only a present moment of pointed light
When you want to burn. When you stretch out your hand
To the flames."

It is here that the past suffering lies. The love of Agatha for Harry's father. The future bond that would hold Harry and Agatha isolated from the rest.

After that, only the Thibetan stones 'fang up' lay before a young gifted woman, to be fulfilled in later life, in a way she had not guessed.

But such years as these lay between:—

"And then I was only my own feet walking
Away, down a concrete corridor
In a dead air. Only feet walking
And sharp heels scraping."

It would be impossible to say whether the play is written round Harry or Agatha, for the two are one.

Agatha:—

"And, Downing, if his behaviour seems unaccountable
At times, you mustn't worry about that.
He is every bit as sane as you or I,
He sees the world as clearly as you or I see it,
It is only that he has seen a great deal more than that,
And we have seen them too—"

As so often happens amongst servants who are life-long friends of either master or mistress, Downing senses the future lying before his master:—

"I've no gift of language, but I'm sure of what I mean:
We most of us seem to live according to circumstance,
But with people like him, there's something inside them
That accounts for what happens to them. You get a feeling of it.
So I seem to know beforehand, when something's going to
happen . . .

. I have a feeling

That he won't want me long, and he won't want anybody."

So the end of the play is finished by conjecture and is left open.

The family will subside once more, closing its ranks, but this time with an approved centre for its axis. John (Harry's next brother) brings it peace.

Harry:—

"John is the only one of us I can conceive
As settling down to make himself at home at Wishwood,
Make a dull marriage, marry some woman stupider—
Stupider than himself. He can resist the influence
Of Wishwood, being unconscious, living in gentle motion
Of horses, and right visits to the right neighbours
At the right time; and be an excellent landlord."

After the death of Harry's mother, we are not surprised to hear these words from the family's lips:—

All:—

"But we must adjust ourselves to the moment: we must do the right thing."

Thus we see the breech close once more, but this time with Harry and Agatha on the further outward side, amongst the wider spaces.

There are again references from "*The Waste Land*," "*Burnt Norton*," "*Ash Wednesday*," and those that will reappear in "*East Coker*" and the other Quartets.

References:—

Eumenides ('the kindly') and of Semnai ('the holy') according to Hesiod primeval beings born of the blood of the mutilated Uranus, avengers of crime, especially crime against the ties of kinship. They are represented as winged women, sometimes with snakes about them. But Pausanias remarks that there was nothing terrible in their images in the sanctuary of the Furies near the Areopagus. They are especially prominent in the story of Orestes.

EAST COKER AND THE DRY SALVAGES

"In my beginning is my end." ("East Coker.")

IN "*Burnt Norton*," if you remember, Mr. Eliot seems to have definitely established the art of duality within himself. He is no longer dependent on stage properties, the off-sets of choruses, an assumed listener or a Watson. He is working within a complete conception of constancy; and we are told by our scientists that the only thing which is constant is change.

That Eliot follows this law is clearly shown in "*East Coker*":—

"Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field or a factory or a by-pass."

Further, in the same poem:—

"Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a life-time burning in every moment
And not the life-time of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered."

In this suggested thought we do not find a poet suddenly rearing a Dutch barn on four gaunt posts, as a vaunted challenge to God's changing skies. We find instead a workman with careful hands and brain, who has learned to weigh the values of a beautiful earth and thoughtfully to place its stones in a form that some future shall recognize as the dawning of a ciphered plan.

The human race, with all its toxic vanities and noisy effects, turned blindly from any form of constructive living, must perform the miracle of passing through the eye of a needle, if it is ever to survive its own thoughtless self-destruction. In this respect perhaps some of the world's great philosophers and poets may provide the real solution, for they tend always

towards simplicity of living, since the superfluous is the unconscious voice of wasted energy which is required for learning.

"And right action is freedom
From past and future also.
For most of us, this is the aim
Never here to be realized;
Who are only undefeated
Because we have gone on trying;
We content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil." (*"Dry Salvages."*)

The first part of this work was concentrated on Mr. Eliot's deep-rooted awareness of Time balanced. It was important to establish this emphasis, as it applies directly to his style.

As his thought balances in Time, so do his sentences; not in the sense of Pope's rhymed couplets, with the cæsura so clearly marked that a line could be drawn down the middle, but in musical phrases which are the complement of each other.

Free verse is very far from being the scattered, inconsequent structure which is put upon it through its misleading title. I have read many clever poems expressing excellent and beautiful thoughts, but the effect produced by the total misinterpretation of the term "free" has not been unlike listening to a line of Bach, another of Chopin, followed by Debussy, and so on. The result, alas, is a characterless hotch-potch which the merited objective is unable to save from extinction.

References:—

"East Coker."

"In my end is my beginning" was the device embroidered by Mary Stuart—"En ma fin est mon commencement."

'Yes, this device was, of course, in my mind, but there was no particular relevance about Mary Stuart except that she had her place in the sixteenth century.' (T.S.E.)

"For the pattern is new in every moment—
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by the way of ignorance.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not."

These suggest a reflection from the instructions for "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*"—"That thou mayest attain to that which thou art not, thou must go through that which thou art not." (St. John of the Cross.)

Partly built on the study of *Mount Carmel* Stanza III refers to Milton's greatest dramatic poem, "*Samson Agonistes*." Also Nada, meaning night or nothingness used in "*The Dark Night of the Soul*" in the first volume of "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*." Further in the same stanza, No. III, which reads—"To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not, you must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy, etc.;" this is based directly on Instructions for the Ascent, Book I, Chapter xiv, Page 63.

"*The Dry Salvages.*"

This is pronounced SALV and then AGES, the penultimate syllable carries the main accent. Stanza IV—"the lady," of course, refers to the Madonna. These figures or shrines according to Greek Anthologies were erected on the coast. There is a beautiful example on the South Coast of France (I think Cap Martin). It was erected by three fishermen who were saved from drowning.

"Figlia del tuo figlio"—Refer *Dante's Paradiso*, translated Laurence Binyon; Canto xxxiii, page 386. 'Vergine madre, figlia del tuo figlio,' trans., Maiden and Mother, daughter of thine own Son. Also line 33, page 388 in the same stanza—"Ancor ti priego regina, che puoi ciò che tu vuoi," translated "Also I implore thee, Queen, who canst incline All to thy will."

"And right action is freedom
From past and future also."

For pure interest it is worth noticing that a similar phrase comes from Erigena, a mystical philosopher of pre-scholastic times, whom Mr. Eliot tells me he has never read—"Authority comes from right reason."

In a letter published by New English, January 25th, 1945, Mr. Eliot drew attention to the inadvertent use of the word "hermit crab." This he explains should read "horse-shoe crab."

LITTLE GIDDING

AFTER three years of silence the Church bells are ringing. Old memories revive and the past mingles with the present and is one.

So let us join steps with Eliot where the ribbon of the road lies ahead.

It is so easy for memory to slip! So easy with eyes following the track and the tangled colour of Autumnal leaves, to forget

why the leaves are soft beneath our tread instead of waving their first glory far above our heads. Yet at school we saw sections through microscopes, where the bark had formed a fine film disconnecting the sap from the leaf stem. Gently but insistently last year's leaf is reminded of its further function in the life of all creation. The winds, too, that were once withstood with such buoyant competitive dancing have now carried the dancers down to the earth from which, and by which, they originated.

"We content at the last
If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew-tree)
The life of significant soil."

Autumn is then, in reality, the first movement of life in preparation towards rebirth; and Mr. Eliot has chosen this moment of Midwinter Spring as the subject of his poem, "*Little Gidding*."

"Between melting and freezing
The soul's sap quivers."

It is a little frightening—the next step follows because life neither halts nor turns back, and we are being told that its purpose may be beyond the end we figured and altered in fulfilment.

The allegory of the tender leaf of early Spring, knowing little of the flaming red and yellow that would ultimately fulfil its leaf-life, is also the analogy of our own life story:—

"—the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living."

In the second half of the second poem there is a figure of the past returning. Partly Brunetto Latini coming out of the pages of Dante's Hell, and partly the idea formed in lines (360) of "*What the Thunder Said*." I will quote for memory's sake Mr. Eliot's quotation:—

"The following lines (360) were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (Shackleton's); it was related that the party of explorers at the extremity of their strength had the constant delusion that there was 'one more member' than could be actually counted."

The quiet revision of the young Eliot of the spring leaf and vivid green, with the older Eliot of the deepening rose, contains a beauty which no reviewer of his work would wish

either to explain or to dissect, but rather to repeat those words written earlier in the poem:—

"You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid."

As I reach Poem III we still hear the Church bells ringing—here in England on 22nd of November, 1942, but also long ago from the Church of St. Julian, Norwich, in the Fourteenth Century.

Eliot is not tied by time, for him all history is also *now*, and in the philosophical thought which permeates "*Little Gidding*" we have the voice of Lady Julian mingling with the bells:—

Perhaps that is the finest message that could be rung to us now. We, who live in this age of bravery and utter sadness, who perversely call those earlier days 'The Dark Ages!' Yet from her work can be quoted a very modern thought. It is this:—

"All manner of things shall be well."
"And then He showed me a little thing, the quantity of a Hazel-nut, lying in the palm of my hand; and to my understanding it was as round as any ball. I looked thereupon and thought, 'What may this be?' And I was answered generally thus: 'It is all that is made.' . . . 'It lasts and ever shall for God loves it.' And so hath all-thing its being through the Love of God. In this little thing I saw three parts:—the Maker, the Lover, the Keeper."

It is then, in this poem, that Eliot welds all Life into one living. He is a poet who sees humanity in the guise of a great Ocean. He sees the rise and fall of individuals as he sees the break of the wave on the shore, and he sees that the individual, having ridden his short run of triumph or disaster, recedes as the wave recedes to the ocean, no longer an entity, alone, but as an immutable whole.

"These men and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed
Accept the constitution of silence.
And are folded in a single party."

In Poem V the unity of the cosmos is more emphatically wrapped together:—

"We die with the dying;
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the Yew Tree
Are of equal duration."

He speaks of history as a pattern of 'Timeless moments which are forged together in unity:—

"All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."

References for "Little Gidding":—

Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637).—In 1625 retired to Little Gidding, received Holy Orders and acted as Chaplain there to a small Anglican community, composed of his brother's and brother-in-law's families, who devoted their lives to contemplation and prayer.—Their community was dispersed, house and Church ransacked by parliamentary troops in 1646.—A record of this survives in the Little Gidding Story Books, five MSS volumes bound by Mary Collett, a member of the Community, containing romances and pious discourses.—An interesting picture of the community appears in "*John Inglesant*" (J. H. Shorthouse).

"*The Shewings of Lady Julian of Norwich*," 1373 (by Duncan Grant, from the Amhurst Collection now in the British Museum). Lady Julian was a recluse, living in a cell attached to the Church of St. Julian.—"If thou beseech it." "In this word God shewed me so great pleasaunce and so great liking (joy) as if He were much beholden to us for each good deed that we do (although it is He that does it) and for that we beseech (Him) busily to do that thing that pleases Him. As if He said: "How might thou please Me more than to beseech (Me) busily, wisely and wilfully (willingly) to do that thing that I will do?"—"What is all on earth that serves us? I answer and say.—In that it serves us, it is good. And in that it shall perish, it is wretchedness. . . . And when man loves not sin, but hates it, and loves God, all is well." (Juliana.)

—"to summon the spectre of a Rose."

Rose in this case is used with the political significance of the White Rose in England and was connected in Mr. Eliot's thought with Charles I and with his visit to Little Gidding. John Inglesant through the influence of Father Sancta Clara or St. Clare purchased a place about the King's person. Refer "*John Inglesant*" by J. Henry Shorthouse, page 63. "To this end the Jesuit (St. Clare) thought proper to remove him (J. Inglesant) from the immediate attendance on the Queen, where he saw few except Papists, and to assist in his endeavours to purchase a place about the King's person. In this he was successful, and about the end of 1639 Inglesant purchased the place of one of the Esquires of the Body who relinquished his place on account of ill-health." John Inglesant loved Mary Collett, the niece of Nicholas Ferrar, and although she returned Inglesant's affection, she preferred celibacy. When she was dying (as a fugitive from England) in a convent in Paris, he

was by her bedside. Little Gidding with its bare and lovely ideals exercised an influence through all his wanderings abroad.

The last three lines of Stanza V reading:—"When the tongues of flame are in-folded into the crowned knot of fire and the fire and the rose are one." Refer page 420, Chapter XX, in the "*Dark Night of the Soul*" (St. John of the Cross):—"For love is like fire, which rises upward with the desire to be absorbed in the centre of its sphere." The rose here is used in the nature of human love becoming Divine. The crowned knot, used by sailors, has the particular significance of three strands representing the Trinity, knotted at the end in such a way as to prevent the ends fraying.

"With the drawing of this love and the voice of this Calling." From "*The Cloud of Unknowing*," a mystical work of the same period as Julian of Norwich.

Translated into English by an unknown mystic about the middle of the fourteenth century from the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite (non-de-plume) about A.D. 500. About 350 years later these were translated into Latin by John Scotus Erigena, a scholar at the court of Charlemagne.—Dante also used them in the *Paradiso*.

Chapter I (Evelyn Underhill).—"Ghostly friend in God, thou shalt well understand that I find, in my boisterous (unskilled) beholding, four degrees and forms of Christian men's living; and they be these, Common, Special, Singular and Perfect. Three of these may be begun and ended in this life; and the fourth may by grace be begun here, but it shall ever last without end in the bliss of Heaven."

". . . 'right so me thinketh that in the same order and in the same course, our Lord hath of His great mercy called thee unto Him by the desire of thine heart. . . .' (Trans., Don Justine McCann.) McCann thinks the Translator of '*The Cloud*' was 'Master' of Oxford or Cambridge, as the English is the Midland dialect, used by Chaucer and would be common to learned clerks of that day.

Areopagus: A bare, rocky hill N.W. of Athens. Council of Elders held there. Chief work—administration and right to punish violation of laws and immorality."

"What! are you here?" (in "*Little Gidding*"). See Dante's *Heil*, Canto XV, line 28. "'Ser Brunetto'! And are you here?" Brunetto Latini was Dante's master or instructor, who died in 1295. He was also one of the Italian poets.

There appeared to be a similar reference in "*The Burial of the Dead*":—"Stetson! You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!" But Mr. Eliot writes:—"I notice that you are inclined to identify Stetson with Brunetto Latini. This is an association which had not occurred to my own mind."

THE UNFOLDING LIGHT

I BEGAN these articles with a reference to the structure of the Coral Reef, and now I am going to ask my reader if he will travel with me to the great rim of the Grand Canyon in Colorado. The vastness of the vision there, with all its wonder, its stillness, terror and peace, gives us a simile in relation to Eliot's work which flings wide every door of the mind.

At the Canyon's rim we stand on the top of countless years, we stand on ageless Butts which have remained as truths during endless days and nights of erosion. Gradually the immature has been divested and the temporary dressings have silted away. The buffeting of torrent streams, storms and winds, like life's experiences, have carved away the unstable and the superfluous. The final truth has emerged as a conception of reality, of responsibility and the ultimate beauty of achievement. Here, at the Canyon the colours of the ages are painted. In the orange of Kaibab limestone; the fawn of Coconino sandstone; the rose of Supai Shales; the Red Wall; the green of Bright Angel shale; the brown of Tapeats sandstone; the Quartzites, down to the beginning, which is the rich dark mauve of granites. The beginning—where the Colorado river lashes and splashes as it hurls its débris past these iron walls.

What has this to do with Eliot, whom, if he stood on the rim, we could hardly see? Only that the mind of every genius follows the same pattern of long-building, of surface erosion, and the final grasp of first truths. If it were not so, then there is only cleverness, not genius, for the quality of *genii in every classification lies in their ability to reach down to the granite structure of some basic law. When they have done this, their work remains. It may be the rhythm of a Bach Prelude; the form and colour of a da Vinci painting; the circulation of the blood by a William Harvey; the first motor-driven Aeroplane by a Wilbur Wright; or Relativity by an Einstein. Whatever it may be, if it lasts, then some great truth has been uncovered and a responsibility grasped.

If you read backwards and forwards through Eliot's work,

* The old plural form of genius used in 1647.

you will trace the colour of the different strata in his poetry; the gradual erosion; the purified thought; the river-polished stone which becomes the exact word to express the thought, and finally the emergence of an impersonal Eliot with the granite structure of a great whole.

Looking across the bare Butts and Groynes of the Canyon we see them as measures in the light of the greatest poem that has ever been inscribed; Nature's hymn of achievement written on leaves of life in the unencompassed book of Timelessness.

With these reflections we turn to Eliot's poetry. There seem many instances that can be cited as evidence of the direction of his purpose in all his later work, which, like the Canyon, contains in its different medium—terror and strife, with its opposite mood of quiet and ineffable peace; barrenness and structural bone, with its counterpart of truth and immeasurable beauty.

"The river is within us, the sea is all about us;
The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation:—"
("The Dry Salvages.")

"I have said before
That the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only,
But of many generations—" ("The Dry Salvages.")

"... .. both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror." (*Burnt Norton*.)

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was at the beginning;" ("Little Gidding.")

"At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall—" ("Little Gidding.")

"..... or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now." (*Burnt Norton*.)

